

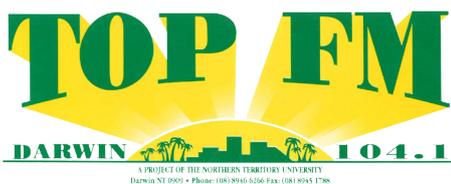


Celebrating 35 years

BLAZING A TRAIL ON DARWIN AIRWAVES

The first 35 years of FM 104.1 Darwin
1981-2016

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FOREWORD

When I arrived in Darwin in 1987 I had never heard of the concept known as community radio. Someone suggested that, as I had a background in the music industry in the UK, I should pop into the Darwin Institute of Technology and offer my services to 8 Top FM Radio.

I was immediately intrigued and became a volunteer in training. Several weeks later I was presenting a Friday night rock show. Little did I realise that this small radio station in the far north of Australia would consume the next three decades of my life!

I was hooked from the moment I started spinning vinyl records live on air. I enjoyed the shared passion with other music-loving volunteers, many of whom remain friends to this day. Since those early times I was lucky enough to work in every area of operations including recently ending my full-time working days as Station Manager. Many successful mainstream media professionals were taught their skills at FM 104.1. It was always a wonderful thing to witness them progress in their careers.

I have met five Prime Ministers, jostled with politicians galore and interviewed dozens of national and international musicians from Paul Kelly to Joe Elliot of Def Leppard.

There were highs, lows, joy and sadness through the years, but something remained constant. It was fun! It is a massive achievement for Territory FM 104.1 to reach its 35th birthday and I sincerely congratulate all involved who made this possible. You know who you are.

Here's to the next 35!

Jih Seymour
May 2016

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	5
THE FIRST THREE YEARS (1981 TO 1984)	6
NEW DIRECTIONS (1984 TO 1988)	9
TOUGH TIMES (1989 TO 1992)	12
FORTUNE TURNS (1992 TO 1996)	15
THE TERRITORY NETWORK (1997 TO 1998)	27
ROCKY TIMES (1999 TO 2001)	29
TWENTY YEARS OLD (2001 TO 2005)	32
TERRITORY FM 104.1 (2005 TO 2014)	34
ON SOLID FINANCIAL GROUND (2014 TO PRESENT)	40
APPENDIX	41

INTRODUCTION

FM 104.1 Darwin began 35 years ago on 5 June 1981. Back then it was a small community radio station started by the Darwin Community College. The idea had come from College lecturer John Potter in 1977. He had been involved with Adelaide University radio station 5UV, and believed Darwin would benefit from a similar education-based station.

The idea was well received, so in December 1979 the College applied to the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal for a public broadcasting licence and in March 1980 a licence to transmit in FM was granted.

An interim Board of Management was set up, and applications for the position of General Manager were called for in July. Low-power (250 watts) testing began on 26 September 1980 using a small mast on the roof of the College Theatre with equipment scrounged from all parts of Darwin. Some small rooms upstairs off the Theatre foyer were sound-proofed with egg cartons stuck on the walls and turned into studios. From here the station broadcast the first song which was Horst Jankowski's 'A Walk in the Black Forest', and the first voice on air was that of Peter Turnbull.

In its initial stages, the station was named 8CAR-FM (Community Access Radio), people soon called it the 'car radio', so it was changed in May 1981 to 8TOP-FM. Using the word TOP helped to reflect the station's location. Before it became a fully operational station in the following year, it broadcast in the evenings for 15 hours a week - playing mostly middle-of-the-road music.

Carole Miller was appointed General Manager in October 1980. She had wide international experience in broadcasting, having worked in Europe, America, Australia, and England, including broadcasting from pirate radio ship 'Radio Caroline' in the North Sea in the late 1960s. Upon taking up her position, she had the station's licence amended from category 'E', which is the normal licence issued to educational institutions, to category 'C', which is a community licence.

In December 1980 new equipment and a new 2.5 kW transmitter with a 6 dB gain, giving an effective radiated power (erp) of 10 kW, was installed. As well, a 57-metre tall aerial, purchased from Telecom, was erected on the College grounds. The work was carried out by College technician Gary Gibson, the College's Administration Manager Rob Milliken, Radio Trades lecturer Jim Jones, and Peter Turnbull, the College Theatre Manager.

THE FIRST THREE YEARS

At 5 pm on 5 June 1981, NT Chief Minister Paul Everingham threw a switch at the station and Darwin's first hi-fi stereo-FM radio station burst on to the airwaves with a frequency of 104.1 MHz. The event was televised live by both Channel 8 (the forerunner of Channel 9) and the ABC.

At the station's opening, Carole Miller stated the station's role was not to compete with the mainstream media (including the commercial radio station 8DN), but to complement it.

By now the station was broadcasting 109 hours a week from 5 pm to 6 am on weekdays. It attracted hundreds of volunteers and supporters, and had a 98 per cent volunteer workforce. It had a permanent staff of three: Carole Miller, enthusiastic Office Manager Irene Wescombe from Victoria, and assistant Julie Smith. The Board of Management comprised Mike Friganotis as Chair, Dr Martin Andrew (College Council representative), Carole Miller (Manager) and Peter Turnbull (College representative) with Charles See Kee, Dave Parry and Dick Barton (Community representatives). A Program Committee was put together to assess programming proposals submitted to the Manager, and Finance and Technical Committees were also established. The intention was for the station to develop as a training facility for radio presenters and producers. As well, Carole put together an 8TOP-FM Announcer's Manual, which set out procedures, rules and advice for presenters at the station.

Jazz enthusiast Trevor Sutton, one of the station's original presenters, was also the station's Ethnic Liaison Officer. His Monday night Accent on Jazz program had a good following, as did his Big Band Sound program on Tuesday nights. Later Charles See Kee became the Ethnic Liaison Officer. Charles kept tight control of the ethnic programs for well over a decade.

Italian, Chinese (Mandarin, Halca and Cantonese), French, Spanish and Hungarian programs were supported by the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) and occupied the 7pm to 10 pm timeslot during the week.

To publicise the station's move towards full-time transmission, the station entered a float in the Bougainville Festival street parade in July 1981. The new station's programming received wide praise at the TOP-FM stand during the 1981 Darwin Show.

The Top End Folk Show, which started virtually from day one, was presented by Maggie Kent, Paul Stewart and Chris 'Pugsley' Holleley. The Sunday afternoon Folk Show continued for a marvellous 25 years, with Chris Holleley broadcasting for all that period (he entered TOP-FM's 'Hall of Fame' in 1998).

To encourage public participation in the station, the TOP Supporters Club was formed. For a \$20 membership fee, members could participate in the station's advancement, take part in the Club's activities, and supply the station with money to assist in its operations. Record albums were frequently donated, and every time a track was played from a donated record, the donor was acknowledged. The station also received lots of other financial and equipment donations from listeners.

Although TOP-FM was a project of the Community College, no students or student groups actually did any broadcasting. This situation remained much the same for the next quarter of a century, but there was a period where Community College and high school students did broadcast from 3.30 pm to 4.30 pm, under the supervision of Carole Miller and volunteer announcers. One of the students, Mark Ash, later became presenter of TOP-FM's Blues Music Program, which had been presented originally by Paul Stewart.

When Sunday afternoon country music presenter Mike Friganotis returned from the Tamworth Country Music Festival in January 1982, he initiated an additional mid-week country music program presented by Les Woods, which became very popular. Les and Frank Maroney continued with TOP-FM's country music programs. Mike later joined the local ABC station to host its country show.

The station encouraged local talent to perform works for broadcasting, and 'Radio Rum Jungle', a music show produced by Aboriginal students at the Batchelor College, involved the wider community in the station's presentation.

On 1 August 1981, new Australian Broadcasting Program Standards come into operation. These Standards demanded that less overseas music be played and that a more Australian sound be introduced into radio programs. Later, a more detailed publication was put together by the Federation of Australian Radio Broadcasters.

In November 1981, the Aboriginal Hour presented by George Butler, John Kelly and Wendy Ludwig started. It featured country and western, rock-and-roll and traditional Aboriginal music.

John Abell took over from Carole Miller as Manager on 13 April 1982. Carole joined 4QS-4QW in Toowoomba as breakfast announcer. John had a 'commercial' background, and had been Operations Manager and Community Services Director at 3SR in northern Victoria. Upon his arrival in Darwin, he made it known that TOP FM's aim under his management, was to please as many people as possible.

It was shortly after John Abell took over that Julia Christensen, who later became a well-known presenter on ABC Darwin, arrived at TOP-FM to help out in the office. As John planned to raise the standard of presentation at the station, he appointed Ian Hill (from Sydney station 2SER-FM) as Production Coordinator. He was also asked to train the staff in broadcasting techniques. TOP-FM continued to employ 'live-wire' Irene Wescombe, who was ably assisted then by Nita Hill.

To celebrate its first birthday, the station held its first 36-hour radiothon to raise funds to equip a new production studio. The exercise was a load of fun for all. Some \$7,115 was raised and more than 400 new members were signed up to the TOP Supporters Club. Not all wanted to be on air; they just wanted to be involved.

During 1982, the station presented on-the-spot interviews during Navy Week, and volunteers staffed a stand at Expo '82 at the Dripstone High School in Darwin. The Expo stand was situated in a hallway, and the station broadcast live from the venue.

In November TOP-FM's Ian Hill put 70 would-be radio announcers through a six week broadcaster's course. Among them were present ABC staff members Julia Christensen and Carole Askham (then Lucas), former General Manager of the Darwin Entertainment Centre and ex-Saturday morning host on ABC Darwin, Bob O'Callahan, and super-fit marathon runner, Adrian 'Cat Weasel' Wellington (who in 2006 still ran as a boundary umpire at Northern Territory Australian Football League matches in Darwin). All became presenters on the station. Later in April the following year, he ran another announcer's workshop, starting with a lecture on microphone techniques.

Volunteer Francis Good put together an in-house magazine Topix Too for TOP-FM listeners and supporters. Edited by Manager John Abell, Topix Too contained the program schedule, profiles of various presenters and new programs. Also in November, Tony Maryon became Chairman of TOP-FM's Board of Management.

A Turkish program was added to the multicultural broadcasts, which included Thai, Filipino, Sri-Lankan, Indonesian, Vietnamese, German and Greek programs. The station received \$35,750 a year from the SBS for 13.75 hours of ethnic broadcasting each week. Sales of 8TOP-FM T-shirts in the Mall also did well.

Later, the station held a 'Rock the Harbour' Christmas Party for its supporters on board the M V Islander as it cruised around Darwin Harbour.

All the while, Steve Sparx, who was an original presenter, along with other presenters Ron McCullough, Doug Geddes, Carole Lucas and Cammy (Kami) McInnes, kept the music going. Anita Hill joined the office team in the early 1980s.

Filching records had been an on-going problem and one that had worried Carole Miller in the past. Now, on 11 January 1983, a very frustrated and angry John Abell announced that 'anyone found mistreating or borrowing records will be sacked'. With no money available to replace damaged or stolen records, the situation had been getting out of hand.

Shortly after Abell's announcement, the U.S.S. Hoel, which was visiting Darwin, presented the station with 100 albums of country music donated by the US Information Service.

At this time, South Australia and Victoria were being devastated by terrible bushfires, so the station immediately held a radiothon to publicise the Lord Mayor's and Combined Services Clubs Fire Disaster Appeal.

New compact laser discs were becoming available in March 1983, and TOP-FM became the first radio station in Darwin, and one of the first in Australia, to experiment with broadcasting the new medium. At the time, TOP-FM was putting together a program 'Sciencetech' from edited science programs presented by various networks including the BBC, Radio Netherlands, Germany's DW, Radio Moscow, and others.

Management and presenters often debated as to what should or should not go to air. The concept of a Gay Waves program was put forward in 1983, but it was not until 1985 that it went to air. It was presented by Bob O'Callahan and Dave Parry. The original half-hour program was quickly extended to an hour from 10 pm to 11 pm Mondays. Bob also presented the Sunday Brunch program from 9 am to midday. Steve Sparx also presented the Gay Waves program for some time.

Another lifestyle program Eve's Lot, discussing women's issues, was also very popular.

In April 1983, educational programs produced by interstate educational broadcasting stations began. These included consumer affairs and school book reviews. Another educational program was Talking Headlines. This program, initiated by Mike Friganotis and presented by Jack Hunt from 4.30 pm to 5.00 pm each weekday, was a reading of local and interstate newspapers for the print handicapped.

A monster fundraising auction run by Darwin's Loveridge Mining and Pastoral Auctioneers (LMPA) was held on TOP-FM's second birthday (5 June 1983), to again raise funds for the station's operations, and to support broadcasts by the various ethnic groups.

With the appointment of Ron McCullough as a sponsorship salesperson and Educational Program coordinator, the permanent staff increased to eight. When technician Gary Gibson moved to Armidale in NSW, John Abell took on the additional role. He was assisted by apprentice technician (Katrina Marlow), who was sponsored by the Government Apprentice Employment Scheme. At the time, there were 120 volunteers helping out at the station.

The station's Program Committee continued to advise the Management Board. In early 1983, the Committee consisted of John Abell as Chair, announcers Francis Good, Bob Richards and Steve Sparx, community representative Peter Wendt, university academic Barbara Sparrow, and Board member and presenter Dave Parry.

In another first, the station in August 1983 broadcast live the Government's Budget Speech from the Territory's Legislative Assembly. The broadcast was then followed with a discussion by economic experts Fred Robbins and Dr Bala Nadarajah, and political commentator and journalist Frank Alcorta. The exercise was followed on 11 October by a broadcast of Question Time from Parliament. It was funded by the Territory Government. By 1985–1986, broadcasts from Parliament House were carried out as a matter of course. Live broadcasting was becoming more common with broadcasts from Expo 83, the Darwin Press Club and highlights from the ANZAAS Conference in Canberra that year.

Lethal Weapon (a local rock band, headed by Noel Tomes) won \$1,000 in the 'Combat Rock' concert organised by Ron McCullough and Steve Sparx in September. The concert was sponsored by TOP-FM to encourage local bands. It attracted a large crowd and was held at the Jackaroo Homestead Entertainment Centre, now the Aboriginal Development Foundation buildings at Holtze.

By the station's third birthday in June 1984, there were some 150 volunteers and regular studio users, which included English language, ethnic language, education specialists and other non-announcer volunteers. In its first three years, the station had rated very highly, particularly on weekends, when many of its programs were the most popular in Darwin. Presenters Steve Sparx, Julia Christensen, Paul Stewart, Ron McCullough, Carole Lucas, Doug Geddes, Bruce Hayter, Kate Stack and Bill Bostle ensured a wide range of music styles were played.

NEW DIRECTIONS

The station had grown and changed a great deal in its first three years of operation. Some presenters felt the style of sponsorship messages being put to air was moving the station away from its community radio roots.

Announcers continued to purchase many new records to ensure the latest offerings were able to be presented on their programs, but to their concern, the Tax Office denied them a tax deduction.

Following a broadcasting licence renewal hearing in July (at which some presenters, represented by legal counsel, objected to the direction in which the station was moving), TOP-FM began a one-day mid-week racing service, hosted by the very popular Warren Pain. In January 1985, the racing coverage was extended to a three-day service. This programming change, forced on the station for financial reasons, saw TOP-FM's mass audience and community support disappear virtually overnight. However, Saturday was still wall-to-wall music, with Steve Sparx presenting 33-And-A-Third (a three-hour album show), Homegrown (Australian music), and an album review show. Permanent staff at the time was nine (seven full-time, two part-time).

On 16 September 1984, the Corrugated Iron Youth Theatre group, part of the Brown's Mart Youth Theatre, began a weekly 15-minute program.

In December 1984, 10 years after Cyclone Tracy, presenters Frank Maroney and Dave 'Martindale' Watters put together a one hour commemorative program of music and interviews with people who were in Darwin at that time. The commemorative tape is now with NT Archives.

In April 1985, Producer-current affairs reporter David James arrived at TOP-FM from 4ZZZ in Queensland, and in the first week of June, TOP-FM's breakfast program hit the airwaves.

In July 1985, amid great excitement, the studio moved from the small rooms above the College Theatre to a modern self-contained complex situated on the top floor of the then Learning Resource Centre (where it remains to this day). The new complex, which contained some of the most up-to-date equipment in Australia, was formally opened on 2 September 1985 by the Director of the Darwin Institute of Technology Kevin Davis, and the Chair of TOP-FM's Board of Management Tony Maryon. Before the shift, the administrative staff was housed in a nearby demountable. It is believed that surplus equipment ended up at Cairn's (Queensland) 4CCR community radio station in the Raintrees Shopping Centre.

Manager John Abell's last day at the station was 15 November 1985. John had been very good for the station, and was well liked. The station staff was saddened to learn of his death on 24 May 1987.

Canadian Stephen Marc Abell took over management of TOP-FM on 1 January 1986. Stephen had been living in Bellingen in New South Wales, where he had been with station 2BBB-FM. Stephen, who delighted in walking around the studio in bare feet, fitted in well with the somewhat undisciplined and chaotic scene at the station at that time.

The station's most notable visitor in 1986 was English entertainer Max Bygraves. Max was in Darwin to be the very first performer at the just-completed Darwin Performing Arts Centre (now the Darwin Entertainment Centre). He was interviewed by Current Affairs Producer David James.

During March, On the Beat went to air – a program aimed at increasing community awareness of police work.

From time to time, the station had broadcast live from the major shopping centres as well as the Mall in Darwin, but in April, Stephen Abell said he would like to see the exercise take place more frequently.

Multi-cultural broadcasting continued strongly, with 19 ethnic groups broadcasting in 25 languages each week, reflecting the cosmopolitan nature of the Darwin community.

The station celebrated its fifth birthday on 5 June 1986 with an appropriate cake-cutting ceremony. At the time, there were more than 100 volunteers working at the station, either behind the scenes or on air. Volunteers again staffed TOP-FM's stands at Expo and the Darwin Show.

A little later Julia Christensen departed to work with the ABC.

The year 1986 was also the year enthusiastic Producer David James won the Public Broadcasting Association's 'Golden Reel' Best Documentary of the Year Award for his work 'Apartheid in Namibia and South Africa'. Part of a speech to the Darwin Press Club by the South African Ambassador was used in the documentary.

By the end of 1986, the TOP-Supporters Club had died.

The year 1987 was a busy one. TOP-FM participated with commercial television station Channel 8 (now Channel 9) to produce a simulcast of John Farnham's 'Whispering Jack' concert; it entered a float in the Bougainville Festival parade through Darwin streets; again took a stand at the Darwin Show, and it was awarded a Certificate of Merit for its 'Vietnam Veterans Counselling Service Program' by Australian Hi-fi Publications as Australia's best Public or Community Service Program. Current Affairs Producer David James was very much involved with putting the program together. It was also about this time the record library moved into a much larger room.

In February, an '8TOP-FM Announcer Training Procedure' document was prepared, which set out all the stages of the training of announcers from the lodging of a 'Volunteer Registration Form' to the appointment of the applicant as an announcer.

John 'Jih' Seymour began working at the station as a volunteer announcer in 1987. However, his natural ability saw him frequently take on the role of sponsorship salesman and producer. After 12 months, Jih became a permanent staff member. He continued to present his Friday night Rock show Groove Tubes making Friday a very long working day!

On Sunday afternoons, the History of Hits program had been very popular.

By July 1987, however, the program had finished.

In August 1987, the Program Committee comprised Stephen Abell, Keith Downer, Ron Hohenhaus, Ron McCullough, Roger Abrantes, Steve Sparx, David James, production coordinator Marc Lansdorp, Josephine Skinner, Anna Gibson, Jack Hunt, Julia Campbell and Hanne Anderson. Trevor Sutton, Jennie Chaplin and Graham Davison were 'observers'.

With so many people about the station in the latter part of 1987, Cammy (Kami) McInnes (who did the 10 pm to midnight Friday Noise, Noise, Noise Alternative Music Show) put together Blah Blah Blah, an amusing in-house magazine dealing with happenings at TOP-FM. One story described early morning announcer Peter McCutcheon (now a Brisbane-based ABC-TV reporter) being confronted while on air doing his 3 am Sunday program by a big burly security guard wanting to know what he was doing at the station at 3 am (the guard had a piece of paper saying everyone should have gone by 2 am).

Blah, Blah, Blah also gave Stephen Abell the opportunity to tell everyone at the station they were doing a good job, and as a result, TOP-FM can hold its own with any public radio station in the country.

However, a downside of having so many people around at the station was the mess left behind by them. Librarian Dee Scully was quite happy to catalogue music and monitor records use, but she became so fed up with constantly being confronted by empty coffee cups, overflowing ashtrays and liquor bottles everywhere, she departed.

During the year, Mike Friganiotis, assisted by Kon Pavlov and Sharyn Peacocke (who hosted the 8.30 to 11.00 Wednesday morning music and current affairs show), presented a live broadcast of the finish of the 1987 Wynn's Safari. Mike's reports and interviews were subsequently fed to the race headquarters in Sydney for nation-wide broadcast.

It was also in the latter part of 1987 that seven-second delay equipment was installed at TOP-FM to allow announcers to monitor (and if necessary, to squelch) on-air telephone discussions.

By the end of the year, the Darwin Community College had transformed into the Darwin Institute of Technology.

In January 1988, the 8TOP-FM Announcer's Manual was revised and extended to become the TOP-FM Station Handbook. The Handbook set out rules and procedures and included details of broadcasting standards, Australian Performing Rights Association (APRA) conditions, Code of Ethics of the Public Broadcasting Association of Australia, responsibilities of volunteers, and even a volunteers' 'Bill of Rights'. Following the release of the Handbook, Production Coordinator Marc Lansdorp released his TOP-FM Announcer Training Manual two months later.

Station General Manager Stephen Abell departed and in May 1988, the experienced and forthright Dr June Kane was appointed General Manager. June had worked in broadcasting at various radio stations in Asia.

Following the station's licence renewal hearing in May, more Aboriginal-oriented programs were put to air. Coverage of racing was still a concern, but TOP-FM continued as much as possible to be Darwin's 'alternative music' radio station.

In mid-June, TOP-FM played some 40 hours of non-stop music to support the World Vision 40-hour Famine fundraiser. The station collected donations at stalls set up at the Institute, Smith Street Mall and Casuarina Square Shopping Centre. Also during the month, the studio was remodeled.

Although the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal required 20 per cent of all music played by broadcasting stations to be Australian (Carole Miller had pushed presenters to play 25 per cent), APRA wanted all music played by the station to be listed and forwarded to it every week. This tedious listing irked all presenters.

For the 1988–89 wet season, Jih Seymour and June Kane produced TOP-FM News and What's On, a free magazine distributed throughout Darwin by Australia Post.

TOUGH TIMES

By 1989 the station began to suffer badly from lack of money and a lack of administrative control. Paper was re-used, the record library was not being properly attended to, records continued to disappear from the library despite efforts to stop it, security was a major concern, and morale at the station was waning. Various disagreements between TOP-FM staff and the Institute over June Kane's role as Manager saw her resign and become a lecturer in journalism. Administrator accountant Jenny Chaplin filled in as Manager.

Bob O'Callahan left to further his career at the ABC and in the entertainment field. He also left behind the frustration of never-ending breakdowns of TOP-FM's now ageing equipment.

On 3 April 1989, Mike Alsop, who had been manager of 8CCC in Alice Springs (the community radio station based at the Centralian College) for five years, took over running TOP-FM. 8CCC had taken TOP-FM programs each weekend, and many calls from Alice Springs and Tennant Creek were received by TOP-FM's early morning presenters.

In May 1989, Litchfield Line Up, a program looking at happenings in the newly established Litchfield Shire on Darwin's outskirts, began.

On Saturday nights in the latter part of the 1980s, David Watters presented Chatterbox – a talkback program for school children. Young Daniel Rogers, who had worked at TOP-FM for a time, often rang in from North Queensland to tell everyone what was happening there.

Aboriginal-oriented programming increased when the station began taking live feeds of the ABC's daily Aboriginal program presented by former TOP-FM announcer, Les 'Echo' Cole. Echo had previously done great work at TOP-FM, and was the man behind the introduction of Aboriginal-oriented programs to the station's line-up. He had departed to take over Aboriginal broadcasting in Perth for the ABC.

While the mid-week racing broadcasts continued because of financial necessity, it also ensured community support for the station remained at a low level. TOP-FM continued to support local bands by presenting concerts, which were recorded for later broadcast.

In another station first, Telecom technician and Saturday morning announcer Peter Sinclair (who had TOP-FM personalised number plates on his car) married his fiancé, Anne Land, live, on-air, at the station.

The station's eighth birthday came around and was celebrated with a grand party.

Later, in conjunction with 8CCC, TOP-FM broadcast the 1989 Brolga Northern Territory Tourism Awards ceremony live from the Sheraton Hotel in Alice Springs.

Mike Alsop gave the volunteers a fairly free rein with what they broadcast, and the station was a hive of activity. At Christmas, much fun and frivolity went to air, stirred along by presenters Steve Sparx and Ron McCullough.

In one of its outside broadcast sorties during the year, TOP-FM covered the Australian Music Day concert in the centre of Darwin. The concert was huge, and featured Yothu Yindi and eight or nine other bands.

During the dry season, Cheryl Kerr and her husband arrived in Darwin. Cheryl had been a volunteer radio broadcaster in Malaysia, and when she approached TOP-FM, she was immediately 'put to air'. Cheryl continued to be very involved with the station over the following decade by presenting (including the Golden Memories program on Saturday mornings for many years), paneling and being a member of the Board of Management.

In mid-1990, presenter Dave Watters, who had been with the station since its inception, completed a series of advanced radio production and presentation workshops.

On 30 March 1990, the ABC's youth-oriented radio station JJJ began transmission in Darwin. This immediately took away a large slice of TOP-FM's younger audience. Things were getting increasingly tough at the station.

Technology had moved on over the previous 10 years and by 1990, the station's basic equipment was antiquated. Newly arrived technician Graham Edwards (who had had his own radio business in Darwin) completely renovated the station's two studios, and replaced the panels with modern Scandinavian 'Polkirk' slider equipment. Later, Graham and presenter David Watters travelled to Jabiru to inspect a proposed transmitter site atop the town's water tower.

In 1989 the Northern Territory University began operations, which meant that TOP-FM's licence was now held by the new university. Cutbacks at the University became a big concern to the station's management in December 1990. There was a dramatic decrease in sponsorship, the station had few listeners, the economy was not doing too well and the station had severe financial problems. With various changes to the Broadcasting Act, it looked as if the station would have to drastically cut its transmission time.

Mike Alsop decided to establish an alternative full-time racing station in Darwin. TOP-FM could use its racing expertise and generate revenue for TOP-FM. As well, such a move would allow TOP-FM to better serve the wider community by using the valuable hours taken up by racing. The necessary submissions were made. Eventually TOP-FM won the contract to operate a new racing network and operations began 18 November 1992.

Money remained a problem. Alsop said that if the financial situation at the station did not improve, some paid staff would have to go, and locally produced current affairs programs would suffer. Although Alsop had given presenters much freedom to play whatever they wished, he always demanded a degree of professionalism in presentation. The station line-up at that stage included New Age and Heavy Metal music programs, and some of TOP-FM's programs continued being broadcast through 8CCC in Alice Springs and Tennant Creek.

The university gave the station two years to reverse its fortunes.

It was at this time that racing program presenter Warren Pain (who was only in his early 50s) died. As a tribute, TOP-FM put together a special tape in honour of Warren's work at the station, which was played at his funeral.

In May 1991, Mike Alsop left TOP-FM to manage commercial radio station 8DN (when 8DN later closed its doors, Alsop joined the ABC). The ever-dependable presenter Peter Turnbull took over from Alsop as acting Manager.

At that time, Producer David James commented: 'It is difficult to gauge the influence TOP-FM has had on Darwin; one can say that musical tastes have been freed up and the community is more aware of what is happening around them.'

Sometime before, David had been invited by the American Ambassador, whom he had interviewed, to attend a US State Department conference on drugs in Washington. Upon his return from America, he had produced a series of hard-hitting programs. It was also a time of tension with Indonesia over East Timor and the conflict in Aceh. David was able to speak directly in Indonesian to a guerrilla leader in Aceh.

To celebrate TOP-FM's 10th birthday, the station and the University Students Union put on a Big Birthday Gig in the university's Graduation Courtyard. The performers included Neil Murray and the Rainmakers, Painters and Dockers, and the Sunrize Band from Maningrida. Local musicians performed on air, and records were given away. Later, a two-day radiothon was held to raise funds for the RSPCA.

On 28 June, commercial radio station HOT-100 began transmission. HOT-100 catered for an older age group than JJJ, and the opening of the new station saw yet another slice of TOP-FM's listeners move 'up the dial'.

TOP-FM's line-up included segments on Darwin High School students' activities, a Sunday Sports Show, various Aboriginal programs, trade union reports from around Australia, finance and investment advice, locally produced music, health awareness programs, and a mixture of jazz, rock-an-roll, classic and contemporary music, as well as ethnic broadcasts. The station also presented a three-hour program of Music from New Zealand.

In the University's 1991 Annual Report, Vice-Chancellor Malcolm Nairn stated: 'the University has a strong commitment to providing support to the community. Some examples of our involvement are the community radio station 8TOP-FM, which celebrated its 10th birthday this year ...'

Until the early 1990s, Darwin had been poorly served with radio stations. Of necessity, TOP-FM had attempted to satisfy the listening needs of everyone in the Darwin. However, with other stereo-FM stations on air, TOP-FM was forced to re-think its role in the community.

Former TOP-FM General Manager Carole Miller returned to Darwin, and she was quickly appointed to her former role and began work early January 1992. She was faced with the challenge of getting TOP-FM out of debt and was directed by the University to implement changes necessary to 'tighten up' the station. The result was that many experienced volunteer presenters and assistants departed. Those who did so were greatly saddened to no longer be able to share their 'alternative' music with the Darwin community. Fortunately, some presenters were able to use their TOP-FM experience in their future careers.

FORTUNES TURN

In 1992, a saviour for the station arrived in the form of the man with the golden tonsils, John Laws. With the demise in February 1992 of Darwin's AM commercial station 8DN, the John Laws Show, which was relayed from 2UE in Sydney, was taken over by TOP-FM. The first John Laws Show broadcast by TOP-FM was on 1 June 1992, and rapidly it became the station's top-rating program. As part of the 'package', TOP-FM also broadcast the hourly 2UE national news service. This replaced the BBC World Service news, which TOP-FM had previously run.

The 50th Anniversary of the bombing of Darwin was commemorated with a very moving ceremony at East Point, attended by Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating and many returned Australian and American servicemen. 'It's time for recognition' – a song written by presenter Terry Annesley – was produced and mixed by TOP-FM's Jih Seymour.

Broadcasting and journalism students at the Batchelor College continued to put their training (under TOP-FM's David James and Sydney-based Aboriginal broadcaster Marguarita Pearce-Groves) to good use on their local station Radio Rum Jungle. The students also hosted TOP-FM's Friday Aboriginal program Us Mob during March 1992, which was sent live 'up the line' from Batchelor.

In April 1992, TOP-FM covered events at the Pacific School Games held in Darwin, and on 27 April, it was announced the NT Red Cross had received a Federal grant to produce a program involving young people for broadcast on TOP-FM.

On 5 May 1992, the program Sexual Reality hit the TOP-FM airwaves from 10 pm to midnight on Wednesdays. This controversial program, presented by Steve and Donnacha and often panelled by Cheryl Kerr, offered a forum to discuss sexual concerns and issues. The program remained a feature of the station's line-up (albeit with different presenters) for the rest of the decade.

The Sunday Talk program, presented by the Darwin Casino's Entertainment Manager Col Newman, began early 1992, and proved very popular. At the end of May, Col's new program Darwin Talks Back was placed into the 9.30 am to 10.30 am timeslot, Monday to Friday, immediately following the John Laws Show.

Manager Miller directed that more Australian music – as required by the regulations – be played by the station. However, at the time there was not much Australian music in the library, and much of what had been there had been stolen.

A concert sponsored by TOP-FM at the university's sound shell on 6 June celebrated the station's 11th birthday. The concert featured Painters and Dockers, Dorkstains (who had recorded Wet Stains, a 13-track cassette album produced by Jih Seymour at TOP-FM), The Reels and Sunrize Band. Unfortunately, the concert was not a success, and to Carole Miller's distress, TOP-FM lost money on the venture.

Although the station was labouring under its commitment to its racing coverage, at least one punter was pleased with TOP-FM's professionalism. In the NT News (25 June 1992), Mr Jim Swannie of Nightcliff praised TOP-FM's service, and referred to the ABC racing program presenters as 'a pack of idiots!'

By mid-1992, Carole Miller and TOP-FM's Board of Management had carried out a complete review of the station's activities. This resulted in the drawing up of a mission statement and a five-year plan, a re-organisation of its staff and changes to priorities and programming. It had been a difficult time for the station. The end result of the upheaval was that only a handful of non-ethnic volunteers remained, and it was felt that TOP-FM had become a semi-professional radio station.

But all this did not worry the multicultural presenters, who just quietly got on with their work.

In June 1992, NT Education Minister Fred Finch presented Manager Carole Miller with a cheque to cover the cost of employing an Aboriginal broadcaster and trainer. This allowed the station to employ Irene 'Roxy' Musk, so that she could continue presenting her Saturday afternoon request show *Roxy by Request*, and her very popular *Drive Time* program.

At 10.30 on two mornings a week, the entertaining, informative and fun *Breaking New Ground* came on air. This program, for the older members of the community, was produced by Jodie Vandermulen of the Council of the Ageing (COTA). It was presented by Lettie Clunies-Ross, Elsie Rogers and Pat Macavel, and panelled by Les Woods. It later became the *Over 50s Club* with Pat Macavel and Lorraine Young. They were later joined by former British army drill sergeant Bert Amey (who had been tutored by announcers Dave Waterman and Les Woods). Other changes saw award-winning Producer David James present *Darwin This Week* (which included talkback), and a Sunday afternoon *Country Show*.

On 13 July 1992 Terry Annesley represented TOP-FM in a charity Mindil Beach celebrity mile wheelchair race against other media personalities. *Breakfast in the Mall*, and the action at the Mindil Beach markets were just some of the other outdoor events covered by the station.

At the 1992 JJJ sponsored a campus band competition held at the university on 7 August, before an appreciative audience of 900; the Dorkstains took off the first prize of \$1,000, a trip to Perth to compete in the national final and an opportunity to have two music tracks produced by Radio JJJ.

Keymania hit the Territory between 17 and 21 August. TOP-FM breakfast host Dave Parry announced he had hidden 25 keys at various locations around Darwin. Ultimately, the key-finders were able to open their treasure chest of prizes at the grand opening on 26 September 1992 in the Darwin Mall.

Northern Territory Football League games in the 1992–93 seasons were broadcast live from the main oval at Marrara by TOP-FM. The commentators for the Saturday afternoon games were Ted Geracitano and ex-ABC sports presenter, Dave McKeon.

In a September 1992 Northern Territory University magazine article, a student journalist reported that although Manager Carole Miller was attempting to get TOP-FM back on an even keel and generate sufficient funds to replace antiquated equipment, there were some who did not appreciate what she was doing. In the article, titled 'FLOP-FM', the station was criticised for its pseudo-commercial 'sound'. Yet another critic accused the station of 'dropping stimulating current affairs (programs) to become a low-grade, out-of-date commercial radio station.'

And finally, in early October 1992, the NT TAB was granted its own radio licence to provide a commercial-free racing and betting service throughout the Territory. The station was to be known as 8TAB, and would broadcast in Darwin on the old 8DN frequency of 1242 AM. As predicted by previous Manager Mike Alsop, the broadcasting experience gained over the years by TOP-FM saw TOP-FM win the contract to operate the new racing network. Operations began 18 November 1992, but the noisy renovations caused a deal of concern to the announcers.

With racing gone from TOP-FM's schedule, Manager Carole Miller reorganised the station's daily line-up. It was decided that from Monday to Friday, sunrise to sunset, the station would target Darwin's fast growing mature audience. Research had shown 27 per cent of Darwin's population over 40 years listened to TOP-FM during the week, and Carole Miller was determined to keep offering them an adult mix of music, talk and news. The *Over 50s Club* moved into the midday to 3 pm slot each weekday. Presenters Bert Amey and Lorraine Young were later given their own programs. Bert was assisted initially by Elva Whitbread, then by Esther Woolnough. When Esther began her own show in 1995, Val Hine (who had been Roxy's assistant) then moved in to help Bert. TOP-FM settled down even more into being a semi-commercial sounding station.

Six days a week, Darwin's ethnic community continued to present more than 30 language programs, and at weekends, the focus turned to specialist music, requests and sport.

On Saturday mornings, Englishman Barry MacNamara (who had also spent some time working on Radio

Caroline) had a most entertaining and popular program on which he played some very 'different' music. This included such gems as 'Patricia the Stripper'. Barry later moved on, and became a breakfast announcer on a Gold Coast (Queensland) station.

The station at last was no longer losing its audience, in fact the tide had very much turned. Between 1991 and 1993, TOP-FM increased its audience some 600 per cent to more than 13,000 listeners a week. The station now was able to commence clearing its debt.

During 1991, David James had put together *Spirits Cry Freedom* – a radio play dealing with East Timorese refugees. The play was written by Maria Alice Casimiro, Graham Pitts, Joanne de Menezes and Carlos Soares, and the sound production was carried out by Jih Seymour. It went on to win awards for Best Drama Program at the Community Broadcasting Conference, and a merit for the Best Ethnic Program in the Public Broadcasting BASF Awards in 1992. However, with a restructure of the station's administration, David's contract was not renewed and in October 1993, he departed.

Having different volunteer Breakfast announcers each morning was not working, so it was decided to employ a weekday Breakfast presenter on contract. Bob Richards (ex 8DN) became the station's Breakfast program announcer. The mornings also included the hourly international and national news feed from 2UE in Sydney, as well as local news.

On 13 October 1992, the managers of Darwin radio stations HOT-100, ABC, and TOP-FM held a public workshop at the Darwin Frontier Hotel. The workshop was sponsored by the Northern Territory branch of the Public Relations Institute of Australia, and was arranged to discuss the value of ratings to local advertisers.

And it was just on Christmas 1992 when TOP-FM went off the air for about an hour following a lightning strike. However, nobody at the station knew. And nobody rang in to tell them.

In an expansion of country music, the Contemporary Country program, with Frank Maroney, Les Woods and Anna Gibson went to air on Friday afternoons at 2 pm in January 1993. Bob Richards continued with his Breakfast Program from 5.30 am - 7.30 am, John Laws with his Show from 7.30 am–9 am, and Col Newman was on from 9–10 am. When daylight saving finished in the southern States, the schedule was swapped around so that Bob and Col finished before John Laws came on at 8.30 am.

On Australia Day 1993, Over 50s Club veteran announcer Bert Amey received an award as Palmerston's 1992 Citizen of the Year for his contribution to the community. He said he thoroughly enjoyed his work at TOP-FM 'as I love all kinds of music, and I'm able to talk my head off. I have been told many listeners feel we are in their own lounge rooms talking to them ...'

The Saturday morning 10 am to midday slot was filled by Darwin's Sport's team of Brian Webb, Ted Geracitano, Terry 'The Ferret' Annesley and Margo Stanley. On Sunday mornings, John Lyne, Anna Gibson and Jeremy Powell were on at 8 am to present 'The Tropical Garden Show', which was full of gardening advice, tips, chat, and good music, and was a load of fun.

A grand prize of a Royal Brunei return ticket from Darwin to Frankfurt was on offer to celebrate the airline's 10th anniversary of service to Darwin. The one month competition ran from 3 May 1993, and TOP-FM listeners had to ring in whenever they heard the sound of the Royal Brunei jet taking off. The prize was drawn at the new Darwin International Airport. Royal Brunei continued to give TOP-FM great support, and the airline's enthusiastic Darwin General Manager Penny Tastula dropped by every Friday morning to discuss great holiday deals on 'Talking Travel'.

In an attempt to revive the TOP Supporters Club, presenters Dave Waterman, Frank Maroney and Les Woods had the Club re-incorporated in 1993. However, with the general malaise in the economy during the mid-1990s, the Club never took off. The main objection of potential members was that all volunteers at TOP-FM had to pay \$25 to be part of it, and it was compulsory to be part of it if you were a volunteer! It was

all so messy that the station lost many potential volunteers. The exercise failed, and the Club was wound up in March 2001.

To raise awareness of the plight of many people in Africa, the national 'Africa Alive' campaign kicked off on the first Saturday in July 1993. Bob Whitford's Rhythm and Soul Radio Show, from 6 pm–9 pm celebrated African Children's Day, and during August, TOP-FM broadcast a series of features under the auspices of Community Aid Abroad. Another Battle of the Campus Bands concert sponsored by JJJ was held at the university on 4 September 1993. TOP-FM was there, as the bands attempted to win \$3,000 worth of studio recording time at TOP-FM, and a trip to Adelaide to compete in the national competition.

During September, TOP-FM did an outside broadcast of its Over 50s Club as a fundraiser for the Council of the Ageing. This very beneficial exercise continued over the years.

During the year, a major staff review resulted in station staff being employed on contract, commission, or fee-for-service. This change saw many cost savings and increased efficiency from the restructure.

Following representations by Carole Miller, a government grant of \$4,000 enabled a Conference of Territory Community Broadcasters to be held in Alice Springs in September 1993. Following the Conference, Carole Miller applied for the incorporation of the Northern Territory Community Broadcasting Association. The idea was that the association would, among other things, solicit, organise, foster and promote community broadcasting in the Northern Territory, and raise and maintain the standards of community broadcasting in the Northern Territory. The NT Community Radio Association (NTCRA) was subsequently incorporated, and meetings of the association were held in Katherine in 1994 and Darwin in 1995.

In September 1993, another AGB: McNair listener survey (paid for by HOT-100, the ABC and TOP-FM) was carried out. The poll showed great numbers of adult listeners had deserted other local stations for the John Laws Show and other TOP-FM programs, and that masses of youngsters had moved across to JJJ. This confirmed what TOP-FM already knew. In the Sunday Territorian of 21 November 1993, commentator Frank Alcorta set out the following McNair poll results.

Ages 10–17 years	%	Over 55 years	%
HOT-100	79.6	HOT-100	14.5
8DDD	6.8	8DDD	47.5
JJJ	8.8	Radio National	14.5
TOP-FM	2.1	ABC-FM	10.9
		TOP-FM	7.9
		JJJ	1.1

The university's 1993 Annual Report stated there had been a change in technical staffing at TOP-FM. The trainee technician position had been abolished, and the station engineer had been transferred to the Education Technology Centre. As well, the report recorded that a major project was the installation of the 8TAB Studio in the area between TOP-FM's administration area and TOP-FM's broadcasting studios.

Following the establishment of the NT Community Radio Association, the NT Government agreed to trial the establishment of a Territory-wide Community Broadcasting Network from late March 1994. However, the concept was given an early tryout with the broadcast throughout the Territory of the AFL Collingwood v. Aboriginal All-Stars match at Marrara on 12 February 1994.

Early 1994, the Australian Broadcasting Authority reviewed radio broadcasting issues throughout the country. The review confirmed that appropriate royalties had to be paid to Australian artists for the broadcast of their music, that a certain percentage of music played had to be Australian, that the APRA running sheets had to be prepared by presenters, and that the limit of four minutes an hour of sponsorship

messages for community radio stations would remain. So 'hated' were the APRA sheets, many presenters would ring up to say they were sick so they would not have to fill them in.

As a community service, TOP-FM sponsored 'Morning Melodies' with Bert Amey at the Darwin Performing Arts Centre (now the Entertainment Centre) during the year. For \$8, Senior Citizens were regally entertained by local singer Kay Brown with Jonathon Boyd on piano, and by other performers including the late Bobby Limb, Dawn Lake, Ted Egan, and sometimes guests from overseas.

The NT Sports Awards ceremony was broadcast live for the first time by TOP-FM from the Beaufort Hotel in Darwin in March 1994. One of the showstoppers was Col Newman's riotous interview with radio station JJJ's Roy Slaven and H.G. Nelson, who were in Darwin for the event. The broadcast of the NT Sports Awards has been a regular feature of the station's yearly line-up ever since.

With a Northern Territory Cubs Soccer Team playing in the Singapore Premier League during 1994, TOP-FM arranged for live coverage of the Cub's matches in both Asia and at the Marrara Football Stadium.

During the year, comedian Jeannie Little and guitarist Tommy Emmanuel dropped in to TOP-FM to be interviewed by Col Newman on his Darwin Talks Back program.

For something different, the station celebrated the start of the 1994 Dry Season by broadcasting its Breakfast Program live, with Les Woods and Jennie Norris, from the NT Water Ski Club by the waters of Fannie Bay. The Club at the time was hosting the National Water Ski Championships. Jennie continued to often host the Top End Folk Show on TOP-FM during the decade.

And if you had liked listening to the song 'Everything's Different Now', you would have been heartily sick of it after hearing it 52 times in the early morning hours of 28 August 1994. The bleary-eyed late shift announcer hit the console button 'replay', instead of 'random' as he left the station.

There was no AGB: McNair radio listener survey in 1994. The ABC felt taxpayers' money would be better spent elsewhere, and as the expense was too much for the other Darwin stations to carry, the survey did not happen. This concerned breakfast announcer Neil Campbell, who could not come to an agreement with the TOP-FM Board over his contract renewal, so he resigned his position in mid-August. Neil was replaced by Doug Barker.

And there was even more panic when popular 'Darwin Talks Back' presenter Col Newman also had contract renewal problems. After 2 1/2 years, Col's last program was broadcast on 16 September 1994. He was replaced by Dave Waterman.

To do away with the five-yearly licence renewal hearings by the Australian Broadcasting Authority, a Code of Practice was drawn up by the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (CBAA). The Code, fully subscribed to by TOP-FM, was ratified by the Authority on 2 December 1994 and came into effect on 1 January 1995. It basically forced community radio stations and their managers to ensure more discipline was enforced in the way the stations were run.

During the year, TOP-FM tendered successfully for renewal of the contract to operate the 8TAB racing service in the Territory. 8TAB continued to operate from its TOP-FM premises, and the racing broadcasts were reticulated by satellite to nine transmitters throughout the Territory.

By 1994 Indigenous programming had reached 18 hours a week, and multi-cultural broadcasts 21 hours each week, with some 28 languages were being broadcast at the time. This fostered the community engagement the university saw as one of its important objectives. TOP-FM continued to have an excellent relationship with the Multilingual Broadcasting Council of the Northern Territory (MBCNT). And all the while in-house surveys indicated a marked increase in the station's cumulative audience.

By the end of 1994, it was accepted TOP-FM was the major provider of Indigenous, multi-lingual, multi-cultural, adult and special interest programs in Darwin, and was recognised as the focus for the dissemination of information and entertainment for those audiences. The station continued to aspire to be the leader in

the development and growth of community broadcasting, and of broadcasting training in the Northern Territory, by acting as the hub of the newly established Territory Network.

During wet season storms, the station regularly went off air. The fact TOP-FM's transmitter shed went under water from time to time contributed to the silence. On one occasion, Producer Jih Seymour, after making himself a cup of coffee, returned to his studio desk to hear... nothing. It had been the third time that morning that the line from Parliament House had 'dropped out'. So while he waited for the connection to be restored, Jih put on some music. He then discovered the silence was due to Parliament observing a minute's silence as a tribute to MLA Jack Doolan, who had passed away earlier in the year. This saw Colin Wicking produce a humorous cartoon of 'Seymour Silenced' in *Bushranger* in the *Sunday Territorian* of 26 February.

A three-hour blackout occurred at the station on 9 March 1995, just as the John Laws Show came on! The station received many calls of complaint, but the power failure this time was due to a workmen cutting through a cable.

Although John Laws had many listeners, not everyone appreciated his opinions. TOP-FM listener Bryan Bulley's Letter to the Editor published in the *NT News* (7 March 1995) suggested Laws was out of line in attacking the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC). Mr Bulley felt Laws was pandering to the bigots in the community, and called on TOP-FM to disassociate itself from Laws' comments. He asked: 'will [the station] continue to support [John Laws'] views by airing them on prime time community radio?'

Live media coverage in the Territory of interstate Australian Rules and Rugby League games in early 1995 was abysmal. TOP-FM came to the footy fans aid by arranging live feeds of both Australian Rules and Rugby League games descriptions from down south, along with the Coodabeen Champions Show and Rex Hunt's *World of Sport*.

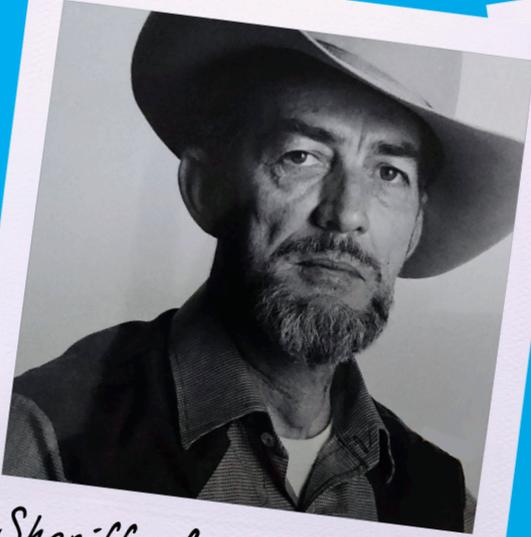
During the year, TOP-FM purchased a mobile studio from Dave Waterman. Dave had brought the studio with him from Adelaide. The repainted mobile studio gave the station a highly visible profile when out and about doing outside broadcasts. It also saved the carting around and setting up of all the separate pieces of broadcasting equipment at outdoor venues.

A memorable and important broadcast that year was the debate over Chief Minister Marshall Perron's *The Rights of the Terminally Ill Bill*. Carole Miller sat in the Parliamentary Gallery on 24 May 1995 broadcasting from 11 am until 3 am the following day. Working the panel back at the radio station was also newly arrived volunteer Sue Latimer (who had previously worked with community radio station 3MGB-FM at Mallacoota in Victoria). Despite having had very little sleep, Carole was back at Parliament House for Question Time later that morning.

Later, after Chief Minister Marshall Perron had resigned and had been replaced by lawyer Shane Stone, TOP-FM was able to report exclusively that the next Territory election would be held on 30 August. However, this immediately saw the *NT News* rush in to say: 'When Chief Minister Shane stone announced yesterday the Territory election would be on August 30, radio station TOP-FM which was broadcasting Parliament, claimed it was a TOP-FM exclusive. Obviously they chose to ignore the real exclusive on the front page of yesterday's *NT News*.'

With the cyclone season looming, TOP-FM initiated the NT's first non-English speaking cyclone education campaign. So successful was the initiative, the station won the Community Broadcasting Association's National Award for the Best Ethnic Radio Project in 1995. As well, the station was awarded 'The Best Technical Achievement' for its broadcast of the Brolga Northern Territory Tourism Awards from Uluru (Ayers Rock) National Park.

By the end of 1995, TOP-FM had become one of the most popular community stations in Australia. The AGB: McNair Survey of 1995, funded by TOP-FM and HOT-100, found TOP-FM's cumulative audience was



Sheriff - Les Woods 1982



Top FM Opening 1981



Albert Koome 1981



TFM Transmitter 1981



Top FM Logo



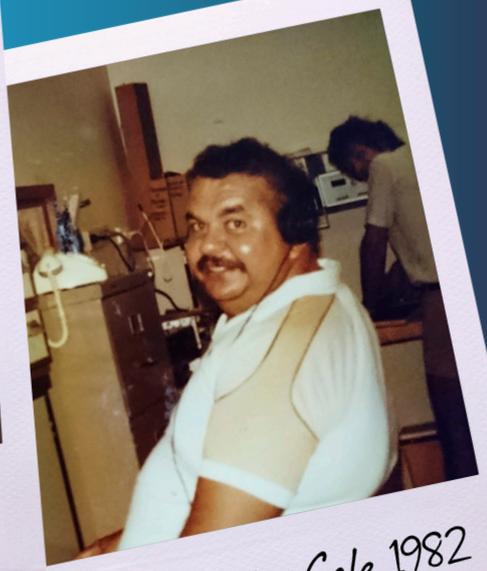
Mike Friganiotis 1981



Outside Broadcast 1981



Carol Miller 1981



Top FM Echo Cole 1982



Mike Quinn 1982



Ron Carroll 1981



Jih Seymour 1987



John Abell and Kate Marlow
1984



TFM Production 1983



Top FM Cruiser 1982



Casuarina Square 1988



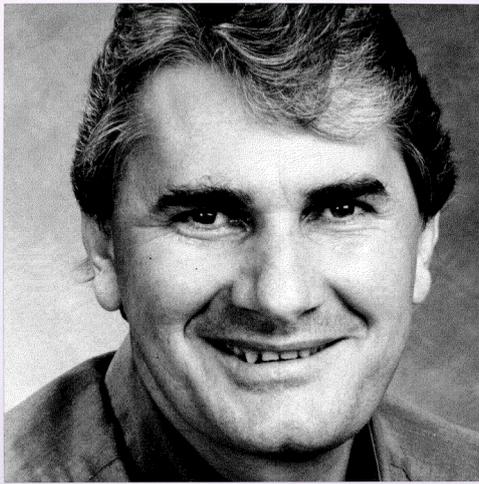
Bob O'Callaghan 1985



Carol Miller and Jih Seymour
1989



Dete Van Stee 1989



Ted Geracitano 1989



Gardening Show - John Lynn and Anna Gibson 1993



NT Sport Awards - Dave Waterman, Brian Webb and Dave Pearson 1994



Bob Richards and Col Newman 1995



Jih Seymour 1998



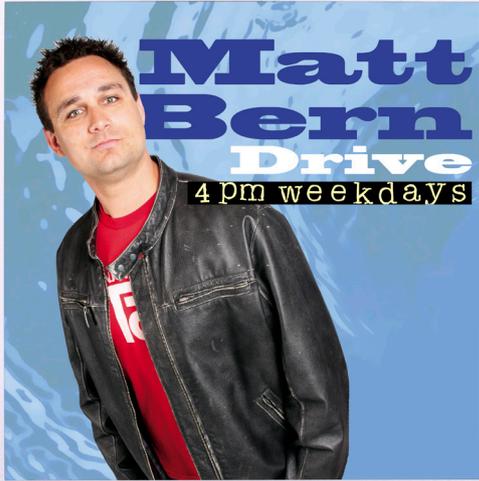
Brian Webb 2008



Joe Miller 2008



Kevin Jacobson, Lisa Sennett and Daryl Manzie 2008



Matt Bern 2010



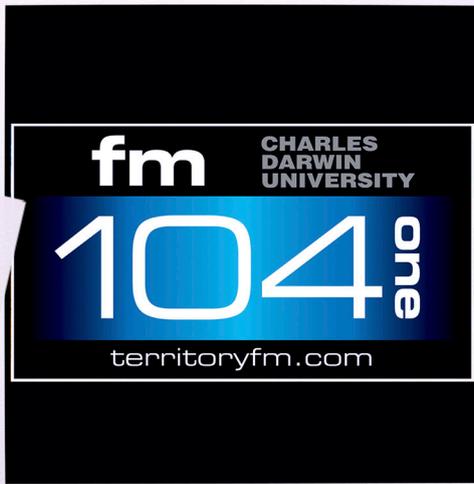
Johnny and James 2010



Pete Perrin 2010



Helmut Schimmel 2010



TFM Logo 2016



Matt, Mel and Jih 2016



Ali and James 2009



Adam Giles, John McKay and Matt Bern 2012



TFM Car 2010

20,000. Some 27 per cent of Darwin's population over 10 listened to TOP-FM sometime during the week. As well, TOP FM's weekday morning programs were the most popular with those over 39.

Transmission of programs to Batchelor, Adelaide River, Jabiru and Lake Bennett was approved by the Australian Broadcasting Authority during 1995. Broadcasting to those centres (with the exception of Jabiru) began in 1996 (various problems saw the Lake Bennett service survive for only a short time). The station's ageing transmission equipment in Darwin was well behind the advances in technology, and a call was made to replace the 15-year old transmitter. Nothing happened.

Early in 1996, TOP-FM's Board of Management put together its Official Handbook and Guidelines. This publication was designed to inform readers about the station, its administration, operations, guidelines, standards and its people. The Handbook said: 'TOP-FM's Mission, on behalf of the Northern Territory University, is to provide a viable, quality community radio station responsive to the diverse needs, lifestyle, and aspirations of the people of Darwin. The station will foster the teaching, training and best practice of broadcasting, and be a major contributor to the development of community broadcasting in Northern Australia.' The publication also contained the Code of Practice mentioned earlier, and also noted that s.9 (3) of the Broadcasting Services Act 1992 still only allowed community stations four minutes of paid sponsorship messages in any hour. In 2000, this period was increased to five minutes each hour.

By now, the university was beginning to make use of its radio station. The station publicised university courses, events and activities, and the university had a regular information segment on the Darwin Talks Back program.

Severe Commonwealth university funding cutbacks at the end of 1995 forced the university to review all its programs. This included whether it wished to retain the licence for TOP-FM. The review concluded TOP-FM should continue its operations, but with a greater acknowledgement of the University (as the station's licence holder), and with an increased emphasis on sponsorship. This meant TOP-FM would be treated as a commercial business, and the station would have to make a concerted effort to become self-sufficient. It also meant, for example, that maintenance work carried out by the university for the station would be charged to the station and that where the station broadcast university notices, the university would be billed by the station.

Peter Scott (who had worked with the defunct 8DN for 20 years) was employed as a copywriter, while Nick Derkson was put on as office administrator and volunteer liaison officer. Sue Latimer compiled the 'free' community notices.

Commonwealth funding for the Australian Ethnic Radio Training Project (AERTP) became available at the end of 1995. The station, as part of its agreement, appointed Kim Beltrame to be the Ethnic Training Officer. She started training ethnic announcers early in 1996, but she left after six months.

In TOP-FM's 1995 Annual Report, the Management Board Chair Chris Tilley reported: 'In just four years, the station has increased its audience by an extraordinary 1,000 per cent – from 2,000 to more than 20,000 listeners. It has increased its staff from four to thirty. It has doubled its volunteers. It has trebled its income. Faith is no longer required: the facts speak for themselves.' She also commended the University's continuing support of TOP-FM.

Sue Latimer began broadcasting one night a week, helping out Kevin Jacobsson who was on air six nights a week as well as presenter of the Scandinavian Program. The late late-night programs at that time were much appreciated by taxi-drivers, service station operators, shift workers, nursing mothers, and other night owls in Darwin, Katherine and Nhulunbuy. The listeners would often ring Sue and Kevin for a chat.

Carole Miller again asked that all announcers adopt a more professional approach to their presentation. Not surprisingly, this tended to irk those long-term volunteer announcers who were managing their programs well.

The NT Sports Awards had TOP-FM as its sponsor in 1996, and NTFL player Gerard Atkins was chosen as the station's Player of the Year. However, the Player of the Year idea 'died' and today the trophy languishes in a niche in the wall of the reception area at the station.

And it was also in 1996 that the work of TOP-FM's volunteers finally was beginning to be acknowledged with awards of Certificates of Appreciation, Volunteer of the Year, and induction into the station's Hall of Fame. The initial 1996 Volunteer of the Year was early-morning program host Sue Latimer (who would be leaving the station within a year). The presenter of the Sunday morning Golden Memories, Cheryl Kerr, was the first inducted into the Hall of Fame. Over the years, Cheryl had presented a variety of shows, and happily filled in whenever asked.

On 16 November 1996, commercial station MIX-FM 104.9 began transmission in Darwin. By taking over the broadcast of the John Laws Show from TOP-FM, and presenting its own style of music, MIX-FM took a large part of the listening audience of TOP-FM. The reception of TOP-FM programs in the area immediately surrounding MIX's transmitter atop the water tower in the Palmerston Town Centre was 'blotted out' by both the strength of MIX's signal, and the closeness in transmission frequency. The problem continued.

It was also about this time that KIK-FM began broadcasting non-stop dance music from its studios in Stuart Park in Darwin. This also took part of TOP-FM's audience.

Charles See Kee, who had run the ethnic broadcasting side of TOP-FM's operations from the early days, carried out a multi-cultural listener survey. For all the effort that was being put into the presentation of the Chinese programs by the volunteer broadcasters, it was found very few Chinese people actually listened to them. The program was subsequently taken off air. Sadly, Charles became very ill, and resigned his position. His management role was taken over by Upali Ranasinghe.

After-hours security at the station was a problem. The behaviour of some of the presenters left a lot to be desired, and security was stepped up. It helped that one of the Security Guards was Cheryl Kerr's husband and sometimes TOP-FM presenter, Joe Kerr.

THE TERRITORY NETWORK

On Monday 11 August 1997, Doc Holliday presented the Territory Breakfast Show from 5.30 am–10 am. This included the comedy show *The Boys from Benalla* at 7.15 am. Doc was followed by Carole Miller and Jih Seymour's talkback/music show *Territory Morning* at 10 am. This was the first morning of what the TOP-FM Board called 'The Territory Network'. TOP-FM was only the second network, after the ABC, to broadcast throughout the Northern Territory. TOP-FM relayed its morning programs to the major settled areas of the Territory – including to 8CCC in Alice Springs and Tennant Creek, 8KTR in Katherine and Gove FM in Nhulunbuy. After midday, each station taking the feed switched over and presented its own local programs for the rest of the day. The Territory Network was launched by Chief Minister Shane Stone at Parliament House with the cutting of a ribbon.

The introduction of the Territory Network gave TOP-FM the opportunity to upgrade its equipment. The ancient cartridges (CARTS), which had been the mainstay of the station (and were proving almost impossible to maintain), were replaced by modern mini-disc equipment. New computer systems were also installed.

Within six weeks of the commencement of the Territory Network, Carole dropped out of the *Territory Morning* show, and left Jih to run it on his own. Doc Holliday left, and Dales Whyte took over the Breakfast Show. When Mike Stanley moved in to take over Breakfast, Jih retreated to his production studio and Dales Whyte ran the *Territory Morning* show for nine months until Col Newman returned and took over the Morning Show for the next four years.

At the end of 1997, Commonwealth funding cutbacks to the university continued to be of concern. A Strategic Directions Plan was drawn up by the university. Fortunately, the commitment to TOP-FM remained as strong as ever. Vice-Chancellor Professor Ron McKay said in the University's 1997 Annual Report: 'the service Radio TOP-FM provides through the newly established Territory Network (allows the university) to continue to play an integral role in the Territory and its development.'

At that time, there were some 120 volunteers presenting a wide variety of music, talkback, sport, Aboriginal and multi-lingual programs.

Volunteer of the Year for 1997 was librarian Paul Heskins, while Saturday morning's Sports presenter Dave Pearson was inducted into the station's Hall of Fame.

On 26 January 1998 the Town of Katherine and the Town's community radio station (Katherine FM) disappeared beneath floodwaters. With Katherine's community station out of action, TOP-FM's mobile studio, generator, and portable transmitter were immediately dispatched to the stricken town. TOP-FM's sterling efforts in quickly restoring radio services were very much appreciated by the Katherine community, and the mobile studio became the home of Katherine-FM until new permanent premises were found.

A live broadcast of the NT Sports Award ceremony on 27 March 1998 was broadcast throughout the Territory. In another memorable initiative, TOP-FM covered the Territory's historic Statehood Convention at Parliament House during March and April. The Convention was broadcast by TOP-FM and the Territory Network from 9 am to 1 pm, and by TOP-FM from 2 to 5 pm each day.

During the year, the mobile studio followed the Territory Show circuit, broadcasting programs on the Territory Network from Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, and Katherine.

On 1 July 1998, General Manager Carole Miller was named Territorian of the Year for her voluntary work with several community organisations. However, in September 1998, ill-health and a desire to pursue

other things saw Carole decide to not renew her contract with the university, and she departed. Long-term Producer Jih Seymour took over as Acting Manager. Carole was soon elected as an alderman on the Darwin City Council.

Also during the year, a basic website was established through the university's Information Technology Section by Rob Adams, another TOP-FM volunteer. Later the site (www.listen.to/TOP-FM) was upgraded to allow for audio streaming of the station's programs. The information on the site was then expanded.

Volunteer(s) of the Year for 1998 were 'Darwin Today' presenters Arthur and Nancy Cox, while Top End Folk Club's presenter Chris Holleley was inducted into the station's Hall of Fame.

ROCKY TIMES

The enthusiasm and commitment of TOP-FM's overnight presenters during the week had been dropping away. Consequently, the station switched over to the BBC World Service to fill up the early morning hours. However, 'live' presenters including David Watters, continued broadcasting very early Saturday and Sunday mornings.

On 1 February 1999, Graham Archer began work as General Manager of TOP FM. He had been involved with radio broadcasting for 20 years, and had worked at 17 stations throughout Australia. He had been the General Manager of the Central Australia Aboriginal Media Association (CAAMA), operating CAAMA radio (8KIN-FM) and television (IMPARJA) stations in Alice Springs before arriving at TOP-FM.

Although TOP-FM had a growing audience in the Greater Darwin area, the station was again financially going through a bit of a rough period. The fortunes of the station rested on Manager Archer's shoulders.

It was at this time, the station was granted \$18,000 by the NT Government to purchase the latest Comrex Vector state-of-the-art outside broadcast equipment. All the gear necessary to broadcast from any location is contained in a suitcase. The equipment is plugged into a phone socket, the station is rung, and the broadcast quality signal travels back to the station and out to the listeners.

A few months later the 'studio in a suitcase' was lent to ABC Local Radio to enable the national broadcaster to present a simulcast of the Tiwi Football Grand Final on both the ABC and the Territory Network.

The 'studio in a suitcase' enabled Col Newman to broadcast his program 'Territory Morning Show' live from the Darwin Wharf in the following July in support of the NT Cancer Council's 'Australia's Biggest Morning Tea 2000' fundraising event. Col later broadcast from the former offices of Ansett Airlines in Alice Springs while in the Alice to cover the 2000 NT Brolga Tourism Awards, and with the assistance of Producer Jih Seymour, from the NT Tourist Bureau's shop at Darling Harbour during the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games.

It soon became obvious that the station's new 'studio in a suitcase' had made the mobile studio surplus to needs, so it was disposed of.

In early 1999, a community radio licence was granted to Radio Larrakia. Graham Archer assisted in the establishment of the new station. Once Larrakia was on air, all Aboriginal-oriented programs, including Irene 'Roxy' Musk's popular music programs, moved over. This left gaps in TOP-FM's programming, which had to be adjusted.

As a consequence, a re-arranged line-up was approved by the TOP-FM Board. The new daily schedule saw the Territory Breakfast Show with Trevor Scott broadcast from 5.30 to 9 am, Col Newman's Territory Morning Show from 9am to midday (both heard throughout the Territory on the Territory Network), the Over 50s Club (which became Darwin Today concentrating on music from the 60s, 70s and 80s) from midday to 3 pm, and Classic Hits of the 90s and Today at Drivetime from 3 pm to 6 pm. Between 6 pm and 10 pm Saturday to Thursday, the station went cosmopolitan, and the ethnic community of Darwin took over. Friday nights were taken up with Trevor Scott's extremely popular Country Jukebox. Late at night, independent presenters played their own brand of music, before the BBC World Service came on. Other than for the station covering special events, the program line-up changed little during Manager Archer's tenure. With the establishment of such a winning line-up, the TOP-FM Board decided the Program Committee had outlived its usefulness, and the concept was abandoned.

With East Timor in turmoil, a 'Blues over East Timor' benefit concert was staged at the Nhulunbuy Town Hall on 15 October 1999. TOP-FM's Blues Program presenter Mark Ash assisted GOVE-FM broadcast the event through the Territory Network, 22 community radio stations in Australia, and world-wide via the Internet. Some \$30,000 was raised in the Territory for the East Timorese people. TOP-FM was later awarded the 1999 Special Projects Award for the station's coverage of the concert by the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia.

Although 1999 was a difficult year financially for the university, a new transmitter for TOP-FM was installed. The original transmitter had been suffering badly from the ravages of the torrid tropical conditions. It had dropped around 40 per cent of its power, and was deteriorating further. The new \$100,000 3.5 kW transmitter, with an ERP of 14 kW, was leased for three years (at \$30,000 rent per year) from an American supplier, with the option of purchase for the residual value at the end of the time. With the changeover to the new transmitter, the station's coverage area increased considerably.

Volunteer of the Year for 1999 was 'Drivetime' presenter Dee Zamolo, while another Drivetime presenter, Daniel Rogers (who started at the station as a volunteer while still at school) was inducted into the station's Hall of Fame.

For the first time, Country Jukebox presenter Trevor Scott broadcast live from the Tamworth Country Music Festival in February 2000. This was followed up by coverage of the inaugural Katherine Music Muster in May 2000.

A TOP-FM survey of more than 810 Darwin and Palmerston radio listeners took place in February and March 2000. It found that over 73 per cent of those surveyed listened to TOP-FM sometime during the week.

However, the most dramatic event for the station in this period was the purchase of the Northern Territory's TAB by the Queensland TAB. As the Territory's racing service moved to Queensland, it meant that from mid-2000, those employed by TOP-FM to run the racing service were thrown out of work. This also meant the \$100,000 plus which the station received to manage the service for the NT TAB had disappeared.

Towards the end of the year, TOP-FM broadcast the Vincent Lingiari Memorial Lecture given by former Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser, from the Graduation Courtyard of the university live to the Northern Territory through the Territory Network. The station also broadcast from a visiting American warship. A Navy Band concert from Raintree Park in Darwin was also broadcast during the year.

Volunteer of the Year for 2000 was late-night 'Mike's Music' presenter Mike Braun while veteran presenter of 'Darwin Today' Bert Amey was inducted into the station's Hall of Fame.

TOP-FM 2000 awards were presented on 4 December at a luncheon held at the MGM Grand Casino in Darwin. Apart from Volunteer of the Year and induction into the Hall of Fame, Certificates of Appreciation and Certificates of Completion of various modules of the station's Ethnic Radio Broadcasters Course were also presented.

The end of 2000 saw the station once again facing funding problems. Lack of Federal funding of universities again forced it to cut back its funding to TOP-FM. These cutbacks saw local hourly morning news coverage dropped from the schedule (to be re-instated once the station became more solvent), and the station's long-serving engineer, Graham Edwards, become a consultant contractor.

Half-hour midday programs were introduced to the schedule during 2000. A topical and sometimes contentious half-hour women's program Women on the Line, was added to the line-up, as was Trevor Scott's motor sports program Wheels across Australia and Jih Seymour's Talk of the Town. On Fridays, Graham Archer and Dawn Lawrie interviewed prominent Territorians on Top Profiles.

The first major exercise in 2001 was the live broadcast in January from the Country Music Festival in Tamworth. Presenter Trevor Scott was in his element as he again interviewed and played the music of scores of Australia's best Country and Western music artists.

In March 2001, the Australian Ethnic Radio Training Project began another series of courses for TOP-FM ethnic presenters under the tutelage of Sara Waylen. Applications to pursue a Certificate in Radio

Broadcasting at Northern Territory University also were called for in the NT News. The Certificate covered all facets of radio, including an introduction to journalism, panel operation, editing and interviewing. Many would-be announcers applied.

Other outside broadcasts early in 2001 included the Top Sports Show with Brian Webb and Dave Pearson from Super-Cheap Autos at Casuarina Village on 24 March, the NT Sports Awards presentation from the Carlton Hotel in Darwin on 6 April, and a celebration of the opening of the 2001 Sailing Season from the Darwin Sailing Club on 21 April.

TWENTY YEARS OLD

Support for TOP-FM and what it was doing was very strong within the NT Government. On 19 July 2001, Communications Minister Peter Adamson announced the station and the Territory Network had been granted \$560,000 over the following three years, including an annual increase of \$19,500. This meant the NT Government had, since 1998–99, granted the Territory Network more than \$1 million to operate from the university.

TOP-FM produced very attractive bumper stickers, which were distributed to the station's sponsors to hand out to their customers. Later in the year, the drivers of those vehicles 'spotted' with a TOP-FM sticker on it became eligible for a prize. This was the start of efforts to further promote the station, increase awareness of the station and what it had to offer radio listeners, and to encourage more people to volunteer to assist in the station's development. To let people know the whereabouts of the station, a large sign, clearly visible from the university's ring road, was placed on the outside wall of the TOP-FM studios.

The station's programs continued to be heard in Darwin, Palmerston, Batchelor, Katherine, Tindal, Tennant Creek, Alice Springs, and Gove (Nhulunbuy).

As the 20th year of TOP-FM drew to a close, the TOP-FM Board of Management consisted of Dr Val Asche as Chair, Graham Archer as Executive Officer, Annette Burke (Mayor of Palmerston), Angela Cotton and David Knowles (Computer Support and Maintenance) as community representatives, Cheryl Kerr as the station volunteer representative, Ramkumar Konesh (who replaced the unwell Upali Ranasinghe in late 2000) as the Multilingual Broadcasting Council representative, one university staff and one university student representative. However, this was to be the last Board of Management for a while. Sadly, the enthusiasm, interest and commitment that had kept TOP-FM's Board going for the life of the station had waned dramatically during the latter part of the 1990s. Many members simply did not show up for meetings, and Chair Val Asche retired in 2002. Station Manager Graham Archer found there was no legal reason to persist with the station's Board of Management, as it, in turn, was ultimately answerable to the university's Council. Consequently, TOP-FM's Board was allowed to slip gracefully away. Although the station was part of the University's Facilities Management Division, the Division had little interest in the running of the radio station, and it was left to Graham Archer to make all the day-to-day decisions.

The station continued to play different styles of music including blues, folk, dance and country. Its operation continued to be well supported in the first half of the new decade by the Northern Territory Government and the university (as licence holder, and as sponsor by providing premises in what is now the University's Music Building gratis). Any deficit was attended to by the University. In 2000, the radio station recorded its first surplus in its history.

The better fortunes of the station enabled Graham Archer to restore the morning local news to TOP-FM's line-up. For a year, journalist Chris Lewis gathered and presented the local news. He was followed by Katrina Bolton, who stayed with the station for six months before she moved to the ABC in Alice Springs (and later, Darwin). The national Australian Independent Radio News broadcasts continued to be supplied by the Community Broadcasting Association.

Another lightning strike in the 2001–2002 wet season destroyed the mixing panel in the station's 'Blue' studio. Insurance permitted the installation of a replacement Eland Kestrel Desk 16 channel main mixer. It was also at this time that technician Graham Edwards removed most of the vinyl record turntables at the station so as to encourage presenters to use mini-discs and compact discs.

For around a year, TOP-FM broadcast the Derryn Hinch Show between 11 am and midday during the week. However, this required Producer Jih Seymour to record the feed from Melbourne and to edit the program. The segments would then be rushed into the studio to be broadcast. This was the first time a 'commercial' broadcaster had been put on TOP-FM since the heady days of John Laws in the 1990s.

Volunteer of the Year for 2001 was long-time presenter Kevin Jacobsson, while sports presenter Brian Webb was inducted into the Hall of Fame.

In mid-2002, Morning Show presenter Col Newman's contract expired and former NT Government politician Daryl Manzie stepped forward. Daryl's Territory Talk program, which included interviews, talkback and discussion of Territory news items, went to air in October.

TOP-FM sponsored the Indigenous Nhulunbuy Croc Festival in July 2002. The station also gave its support to the Tennant Creek Croc Festival held the following year in August 2003.

Following the submission of a compilation tape put together by Producer Jih Seymour, TOP-FM's Saturday morning sports presenters Dave Pearson and Brian Webb were awarded the inaugural Australian Sports Commission Community Sports Media award in Canberra in mid-September 2002.

Volunteer of the Year for 2002 was Territory talk presenter Daryl Manzie, while Saturday late-night 'alternative music' presenter Chris Galgocc was inducted into the Hall of Fame'.

The Harris analogue transmitter had functioned very well over the three-year lease period. Lease payments had been well supported by the Government, and the decision was taken by the university to purchase the transmitter for its residual value of \$10,000. As it was expected, the transmitter continued to perform well, and as digital transmitting was many years away, the purchase was considered to be a very worthwhile addition to the university's assets.

In November 2003, the Northern Territory University, along with most other tertiary institutions in the Territory, amalgamated to form the all-encompassing Charles Darwin University (CDU). This saw radio station 8CCC on Centralian College campus in Alice Springs become surplus to the university's needs. 8CCC moved out to new studios in the Eastside Shopping Centre in Alice Springs, but continued to take TOP-FM's 'feed' of the Breakfast Show, Territory Talk, and the broadcast of NT Parliament Question Time.

Volunteer of the Year for 2003 was long-time presenter Daniel Rogers, while German Program presenters Christel Kraus and Hanne Anderson were inducted into the Hall of Fame.

On 9 March 2004, NT Government's Communications Minister Paul Henderson announced a grant to TOP-FM of \$164,500 to support the station.

In July 2004, Station Manager Graham Archer departed, and moved to Tamworth. He was presented with a leather 'Micks' whip to remind him of the Northern Territory. Producer Jih Seymour was again Acting Manager pending the appointment of a new Station Manager.

In the NT News of 17 September 2004, it was reported that 45 per cent of radio listeners in Darwin tuned in to TOP-FM. This figure made the station the most popular community radio station in Australia (McNair Poll).

The university's 2004 Annual Report commented: 'The commercial units continued to perform well, with 8TOP-FM, a community radio station operated by the University, gaining a very high listener rating in a McNair Ingenuity Research listener survey undertaken during September 2004. The station had the highest listenership in Darwin for the breakfast program.'

In the NT News (4 February 2005), it was announced TOP-FM had been given a further grant of \$150,000 to continue its operations. The article commented the station had seven employees and over 200 volunteers producing some 126 hours of programming each week. Five days later, applications to attend another Certificate in Radio Broadcasting Course were called for by the university in the NT News.

TERRITORY FM 104.1

In mid-March 2005, Perth commercial radio broadcaster Peter Perrin arrived to take charge of TOP-FM. During his 30-year career, Peter had been a TV cameraman and news presenter, and had spent two years as Program Director for Radio 1 in Singapore. His career saw him work his way up through various West Australian radio stations to become General Manager at 6KY in Perth. Peter had also set up an AM/FM station in Mandurah (about 60 km south of Perth), and spent some time as a lecturer in broadcasting. It was under his watch that 6KY was converted to FM station MIX-FM 94.5. On Peter's arrival at TOP-FM, Jih Seymour again retreated to his production suite.

Peter Perrin's arrival oversaw moves to implement a monumental upgrade of TOP-FM's equipment. During September 2005, RCS system technicians, assisted by station technician Graham Edwards, ripped out virtually all the existing equipment and installed the modern state-of-the-art Master Control/Selector computer system. One computer was placed in Production, one in the OnAir Studio, another in the Voice-tracking Studio and two more in the general office space for scheduling-timing out purposes. For the first time in its history TFM 1041 could pre-record weekend announcers, time out the shows and then run in 'Auto' with no one in the radio station. The best of the mini-disc and CD equipment was retained in the existing Green studio for the use by the multi-cultural presenters.

Peter Perrin re-branded the station as Territory FM 104.1, the station's web page was changed to www.territoryfm.com and redesigned car bumper stickers were distributed as part of the exercise. With some 4221 songs directly accessible in the new computer database, the record library door was locked. As space at the station was at a premium, disposal of the station's vinyl record collection was planned.

In the Sunday Territorian (3 April 2005), it was reported the Nielsen Media Research survey carried out in October 2004 had found TOP-FM's ratings had increased from 1.8 percent to 3.2 percent since the 2001 Nielsen survey.

On 7 August 2005, Geoff Cannon, a commercial broadcaster from Geraldton Western Australia, well versed in the operation of the new equipment (and a former broadcasting student of station Manager Perrin) arrived in Darwin to become TFM's Program Coordinator and Breakfast Show presenter. Geoff was immediately thrown into the position of also becoming a lecturer in broadcasting at the university, when the previous lecturer (ABC presenter Richard Margetson) withdrew.

Under Peter Perrin's direction, and following the installation of the new equipment, the 'sound' of the station through much of the day changed to a 'Hits and Memories' sound. A more professional style of presentation along with a new image was implemented, which saw some long-term presenters decide to leave. Not all the station's listeners were enthused either with the changes implemented by Peter Perrin. Correspondents to the NT News on 3 and 9 November 2005 expressed concern over the station's new direction and the loss of the Darwin Today Over 50s Club program. Representations were also made directly to the university's Vice-Chancellor.

As there was no longer a Board of Management, Manager Perrin reported directly to the university's Executive Director of Corporate Services, Dr Scott Snyder (who was in turn answerable to the Vice-Chancellor and the University Council). Dr Snyder was also keen to directly involve the university in the station's operations.

The station continued to be well supported with grants from the NT Government.

In late November 2005, Paul Wyatt's community lifestyle and activities Saturday Breakfast Show, sponsored by Neighbourhood Watch and Crime Stoppers, began. Territory FM broadcast the annual NT Sports Awards ceremony, as well as other broadcasts from NT Expo, the Royal Darwin Show, Palmerston Troppo Fest, Australia Post and Casuarina Square - all making very good use of the 'studio in a suitcase'. The station remained a sponsor of the Brolga Northern Territory Tourism Awards.

In December 2005, Territory FM's connection with 8CCC in Alice Springs was severed. Peter Perrin then arranged for Territory FM's direct 'feed' of Territory Talk and Parliament Question Time to be broadcast by privately-owned narrowcast station Roots Radio 98.7 FM in Alice Springs. 8CCC then transmitted a delayed Question Time to Alice Springs and Tennant Creek the following day.

Again, the station's equipment was affected by lightning strikes during the 2005–2006 wet season. To alleviate the problem, a microwave link between the studio and the transmitter was installed in the latter part of 2005.

In 2006 the station had seven employees. The full-time members were Station Manager Peter Perrin, Producer Jih Seymour, Program Coordinator Geoff Cannon, Administrator Sandy Mackintosh, and magazine program Chatroom host Gino Luglietti. Part-timers were presenter/sales representatives Paul Wyatt and Joe Miller (who had a lengthy career in broadcasting in Australia). Peter Perrin also acted part-time as Director of the university's Corporate Communications section in the latter part of the year. There were still many volunteers. These included Daryl Manzie and his morning 'Territory Talk' show, and all ethnic presenters, putting together their own programs.

To raise the profile of Territory FM, a deal was struck mid-2006 for a major sponsor to lease Territory FM two small vehicles in exchange for radio sponsorship. Territory FM also sponsored the Small to Micro Business award at the Chief Ministers NT Export and Industry Awards early October 2006. The prize was won by Alice Springs' Mbantua Gallery. Paul Wyatt and presenter Kevin Jacobsson did a series of outside broadcasts promoting the station and lifestyle activities.

In October 2006, after being on TOP-FM/Territory FM since the station's inception in 1981, the Top End Folk Show ended. As well, Dave Pearson withdrew from the Saturday Sports Show, to be replaced by basketball supremo Jeff Larson.

On weekday mornings at 5.30 am, the BBC World Service informed Territory FM listeners on what had happened overnight internationally. This was followed at 6 am by Territory Breakfast presented by Geoff Cannon. Daryl Manzie and Territory Talk filled in the morning keeping you up to date on local, national and international affairs. Gino Luglietti hosted The Chatroom at 11 am and Jih Seymour played the hits of the 60s, 70s and the 80s in Classic Cafe from midday. Early in 2006, the Drive Program was presented by Dik Spence and later in the year by Joe Miller. At 10 pm, after the multilingual programs, young Andrew Gillies presented the two-hour Late Shift program Tuesday to Thursday, while Christine Atkinson whiled away the Alternative Hours from 10 pm to midnight on Friday nights.

Early in December 2006, Breakfast announcer Geoff Cannon and Territory Talk host Daryl Manzie visited Alice Springs. As well as presenting their own programs from the Alice Springs Convention Centre, Geoff and Daryl also attended the 2006 Brolga Northern Territory Tourism Awards at the Centre. Later in the month, as another public relations exercise, Territory Talk was presented live by Daryl Manzie from outside Dymock's bookstore at Casuarina Square Shopping Centre in Darwin, which was attended by recently appointed CDU Vice-Chancellor, Professor Helen Garnett.

On air, the station continued to reposition itself as a professional and listenable community broadcaster appealing to a wide range of listeners. For music, the station had a refined middle-of-the-road policy. On Territory Talk, Daryl Manzie interviewed politicians including Kim Beasley, Julia Gillard, Mal Brough and Julie Bishop, among many others. Regular weekly interviews also included the Vice-Chancellor, other senior university staff, visiting researchers as well as university guests and celebrities from the popular arts.

Anecdotal evidence of greater listenership saw expansion in sponsorship during the year, exceeding Budget expectations. The station actively promoted the university through a strong association and providing key university interest spots. In 2006, coverage of Territory FM included Alice Springs on 98.7FM, Katherine on FM 101.3, Adelaide River on 99.7FM and Batchelor 98.5FM.

During this time, Peter Perrin and station technician Graham Edwards visited Jabiru to investigate the possibility of Territory FM transmitting to the town. Although frequency 104.1FM was allocated to a

proposed station there, transmission did not eventuate. A small full-time solar electricity powered relay transmitter had been set up many years earlier at Lake Bennett 96.9FM, but it had failed after a very short time and was never replaced. Although mining giant Rio Tinto and the general population at Nhulunbuy indicated they appreciated Territory FM transmitting to their town, the choice to 'go on their own' saw the feed from Territory FM to Gove 106.9FM cease.

On a brighter note, a plaque was presented to the station at the 2006 Chief Minister's NT Export and Industry Awards acknowledging its sponsorship of the Territory Small to Micro Business Award. Another plaque was to be presented to the station in 2008 by the Charles Darwin University Foundation Chairman 'in recognition of [its] generous support to the development of the university'.

In the NT News of 31 March 2007, the clean-out of the station's long valued record collection was announced. It fell to Territory FM announcers Geoff Cannon and Gino Luglietti to deal with more than 8000 LPs sitting in 130 cartons in storage, ready to be shipped out, and around 10,000 45s and 6000 CDs. All this was in preparation for the station becoming digital. Peter Perrin commented, 'There's some stuff [among the collection] I've never even heard of'. At the same time, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation in Darwin was going through the same exercise. A former volunteer TOP-FM presenter purchased the whole collection for \$10,000.00.

In mid-2007, Basketball supremo and Territory FM Sports commentator Jeff Larson departed the station leaving long-term volunteer presenter Bryan Webb to host the 'Saturday Sports Show' alone.

In July 2007, Producer/presenter Jih Seymour took a year off to live in Sanur, Bali where his wife had secured a 12-month teaching position.

The morning programs broadcast on relay from Territory FM had avid listeners in Alice Springs. However, a complaint to the Australian Communication and Media Authority (ACMA) associated with the fact that a narrowcast licence has strict conditions and did not allow for the variety of programming being sent to Alice Springs by Territory FM. To comply with the ACMA judgement, Territory FM ceased broadcasting its Darwin programs and began streaming Music of the Sixties to the Alice Springs Narrowcast station 98.7 FM.

In September 2007, breakfast announcer Geoff Cannon returned to Western Australia after being with the station for two years. Peter Perrin's son, James, and his MIX-FM breakfast co-host Alice (Ali) Burton, immediately joined Territory FM and James Perrin was appointed Program Director.

'There are no signs of a ceasefire in the war between commercial radio station MIX-FM and community rival Territory FM' trumpeted Bushranger in the Sunday Territorian (6 January 2008). MIX-FM program director Peter Hill had also arrived at Territory FM as Music Scheduler and Drive host.

Leanne Oesterheld was appointed Sales Manager, Producer/presenter Jih Seymour returned from Bali, and after being with Territory FM for less than a year, Pete Hill departed for Brisbane and was replaced on Drive by ex-MIX-FM presenter Josh Batters.

Staffing at Territory FM settled down over the following year. In the Territory Regional Weekly (31 July 2009), Territory FM was promoted as the 'Home of Darwin's No Repeat Work Day', and listeners were invited to tune in to James and Ali on weekdays for breakfast. Daryl Manzie continued to cover issues from the NT and beyond every weekday from 9am.

A Certificate of Appreciation was received at the station from the NT Minister for Tourism for the station's 'Valued support of the 2009 Brolga Northern Territory Tourism Awards' as a 'Rising to the Challenge' sponsor.

It took a while, but the changeover from analogue to digital studio equipment took place in January 2010. During the month, the original Eland Kestrel broadcasting system (installed in the Graham Archer era) was replaced with Axia digital equipment. At great expense, it was installed by Axia technicians from New Zealand. In the following year the analogue voice-tracking system in studio 2 was dismantled in February, and upgraded Axia digital equipment was installed.

Australian radio presenter Matt Bern arrived in Darwin in 2010 and initially filled in for a couple of weeks in the Classic Café while Joe Miller was on leave. Not long after, he became the regular Drive Time host.

For the first time the station broadcast live at CDU's Open Day in August 2011 from the front of the Library.

On 26 January 2011, the station was presented with a plaque from the Australia Day Council acknowledging it as being an Australia Day sponsor. A month later it was again acknowledged, this time by the NT Emergency Services with a Certificate of Appreciation 'in recognition of your continued support of the Northern Territory Emergency Service Volunteers, specifically during their recent operational deployment to Queensland to assist in the Queensland 2011 flood crisis and severe Cyclone Yasi recovery operations and subsequent Tropical Cyclone Operations'.

During the year, breakfast announcer Alice Burton left the station to work for Natasha Griggs, MP and was replaced by New Zealander Johnny McKay, who had commenced as a volunteer several weeks earlier.

A restructure took place at the university on 1 January 2012. Among other things, this saw Vice-Chancellor Professor Barney Glover announce that the financially troubled Territory FM was to become part of the university's new Office of Media, Advancement and Community Engagement (MACE), under Director Robyn McDougall.

On the first Wednesday of July 2012, on-air interviews raised the community awareness of dementia and the support services available. This was followed up with informative spots titled 'There's a Difference'. On 18 November, the station was informed the campaign had seen a marked increase in helpline calls to Alzheimer's Australia NT. The not-for-profit group was 'very grateful for the support that Territory FM provides to Alzheimer's Australia NT by broadcasting important community information'.

The station also was presented by the University's Office of MACE with a Certificate of Appreciation 'for your commitment to supporting valuable "hands on" educational experiences for NT Secondary School students'. Often school children would do work experience at the station and be introduced to the intricacies of radio presentation.

Many thanks were received by the station throughout the year from various organisations. These included thanks from the Art and Fist Full of Films staff, the Cancer Council for its Pink Ribbon Day, 'Keep Australia Beautiful' and the Darwin Seniors Computer Club.

In the 2012 dry season the Territory FM cricket team triumphed in the Lord Taverners Shorelands Group Cricket Match. A very nice winner's trophy was on display in the station's foyer.

During the year, the one hour 'Best of Alan Jones' morning program was axed following various comments made by Jones, which raised the ire of listeners and the university.

In a media release dated 4 December 2012, titled 'Cutting Labor's Waste', it was announced as part of a Mini-Budget that the newly elected CLP Government led by Terry Mills, would cease broadcasting Parliament Question Time through Territory FM. The broadcast was available online and by axing the live broadcast the Government would save \$59,000.00 in 2012-13, and \$64,000.00 ongoing from 2013-14. This cessation saw a big drop in the station's revenue.

June 2013 saw the arrival of new Sales Manager, Kristy Collis. Kristy took over the role from Krissy Bern, who had been filling the position on a temporary basis. Lucy Periton from the UK was also appointed to the part-time role of Promotions and Marketing.

Under the heading 'Territory FM boss happy to pull plug', the NT News (12 July 2013) announced General Manager/ broadcaster Peter Perrin was stepping down after being with the station for nine years. He was to move to 2ST Power FM in Shoalhaven, Nowra, NSW. Peter Perrin commented that when he took over in 2004, the station (then TOP-FM) 'had a lot of good intentions but not a lot of listeners'. He was pleased he was able to turn that around, but said he found dealing with the university establishment a bit of a trial. He said that Territory FM would soon be 'independently run by a new board named Territory Radio Inc.', which should allow the station to 'move at the speed of sound instead of the speed of bureaucracy'.

The concept of Territory Radio Inc., set up by Peter Perrin and the Community Board to take over the University's 104.1 FM broadcast licence, failed once the extent of the station's deficit was revealed by the university to the members of the proposed Community Board.

Upon Peter's resignation, his son James was asked to take on the temporary role of Acting Manager until a new manager was appointed. Producer/Announcer Jih Seymour, on a short holiday in Bali, received a call from Director of MACE Robyn McDougall to take on the position of Station Manager. Jih was formally appointed to the position in October 2013 and was given the task of turning Territory FM around and making it a financially sustainable operation not reliant on CDU funding.

One half of Territory FM's breakfast team, Johnny McKay, resigned in July 2013.

In the NT News [27 August 2013], it was reported the second half of Territory FM's breakfast team, 31-year-old Perth-born James Perrin, had resigned from the station, and was leaving Darwin to be with his partner. He took up a position with KRock FM, Bay FM and Hot Country in Geelong. As he departed, James commented that the opportunities [in Darwin] were significant and had been a great stepping stone in his career. Johnny McKay instantly returned to fill the breakfast spot as a solo host. 'Drive Show' presenter and Producer Matt Bern was immediately appointed as Content Manager, a position responsible for the on air sound of the station.

During the latter months of 2013 Jih Seymour and Robyn McDougall, Director of MACE, started the process of ensuring all staff were on official CDU contracts. Half the staff were still employed through an agency, which had occurred during the uncertain period when Territory FM was suffering severe financial losses and the university was considering its future as the licence-holder. All university contracts were issued by the end of the year. At the launch of the Chief Minister's Export and Industry Awards Jih Seymour announced that Territory FM was celebrating its 34th year of broadcasting in the NT and was also celebrating the continuing support of its licence-holders Charles Darwin University! The community board was disbanded at the end of 2013. At the same time Vice-Chancellor Barney Glover refreshed the Community Advisory Board by appointing new members. Volunteer Certificates of Appreciation were reintroduced and distributed at the end of year staff/volunteer function as the sun set over the waters of Cullen Bay.

By 2014, the 15-year-old 3.5 kW Harris TX transmitter, installed in 1999, was on the verge of collapse. Instead of the expected lifespan of 30 years, and irrespective of regular maintenance, the transmitter had simply failed to cope with the ravages of Darwin's tropical climate and wet-season lightning activity. In the NT News [11 March 2014] it was reported the station and the transmitter was off the air for more than 30 minutes following a nearby lightning strike. Two days earlier, electrical storms had also put the station off the air for 40 minutes during the afternoon rush hour. Manager Jih Seymour admitted the transmitter 'can be problematic in inclement weather'.

As a consequence, an application was made for a Transmitter Support Grant to the Community Broadcasting Foundation. Following approval, a new 5 kW \$30,000 Elenos TX was ordered. In the interim, contracted station technician Graham Edwards organised for a temporary 1 kW transmitter to be activated to keep the station functioning but listeners on the outskirts of Darwin were too far away to receive a signal.

The new transmitter arrived, was installed 19 June and began transmitting 23 June. The old Harris transmitter was the size of a large wardrobe, while the new Elenos transmitter was the size of a coffee table. The commissioning of the new transmitter was announced in the NT News [3 July 2014]. Needless to say, the station's coverage of the Darwin, Palmerston and rural area, and the quality of the signal increased dramatically [25 July 2014].

Two lucky listeners won the year's biggest on-air competition and found themselves being flown to Kuala Lumpur courtesy of sponsors Malaysia air. This included free accommodation and tickets to the Grand Prix Formula 1 motor race.

Kathie Snowball was appointed to organise Finances and Administration of the station in March 2014. She soon found herself in the full swing of the very busy dry season schedule, which included live broadcasts at every major event including the V8s, the Royal Darwin Show, Fred's Pass, the Darwin Festival and Territory Day at Mindil Beach where the station was broadcasting out along the beach music synchronised to the massive fireworks display.

As the year drew to a close the annual 12 Days of Christmas gave away valuable prizes to diligent listeners with good memories! On the 12th day, you won all 12 prizes if you could name every daily prize in the competition; these were then delivered by truck to your home!

ON SOLID FINANCIAL GROUND

Territory FM ended the financial year in 2014 in a very strong position, possibly for the first time in its history. To celebrate, the station hired a fishing charter for its staff – many fish were hauled out of Darwin Harbour that afternoon. Also a new sign was erected on the outside wall of the building.

The year 2015 kicked off with another massive on-air competition. This time a family of four would be flown to Singapore, given free accommodation and passes to theme parks for the whole weekend. All thanks to sponsors Silk Air – the lucky winners were ecstatic and presented Territory FM with framed photos of their fun times in 'Singers'.

Johnny McKay decided to move to Alice Springs in April 2015, and Melinda 'Mel' Little became the new host of Breakfast. Mel was followed at 9 am by Mornings with Daryl Manzie. Classic Cafe with Joe Miller covered 11 am to 3 pm and Drive with Matt Bern from 3 pm to 6 pm. Nine News went live every night at 6 and was followed by the inimitable sound of Nights with Alice Cooper.

April also saw Joe Miller make the decision to retire after 10 years with TFM. He presented Classic Café on a daily basis and was the Producer of Mornings with Daryl Manzie. Joe's farewell was made complete with Jonathon Uptin and the Nine News team recording a story with him and showing video footage of Joe in his early broadcasting years. Matt Bern presented him with a framed collage of Territory FM photos as a farewell gift.

Long-term volunteer Peter Butler was drafted in to replace Joe as Mornings Producer. Peter also became the regular standby host for Territory Mornings when Daryl Manzie was on leave or unavailable. Jih Seymour returned to day time radio to host Classic Café after a 10-year absence.

Territory FM had broadcast the half hour Nine News bulletin 'live' every weekday for many years. In mid-2015 it was announced by Nine TV boss Andy Bruyn that the bulletin would increase in length to one hour. After several meetings, it was agreed that Territory FM would continue to broadcast the news at 6 pm – in its one-hour format. The ever popular Alice Cooper would start at 7pm.

Local music was also getting more airtime with the new Thursday night show Fresh Mint presented by Amy Etherington. Fresh Mint featured all the NT musicians and bands who were releasing their own recorded material. It was a great boost for the musicians in the NT and was also followed on Friday nights with the Drive it Live sessions. These sessions had been recorded live in the Territory FM studios over the years and can be seen on the YouTube site – Drive it Live on TFM.

The dry season went into full swing, as always, with TFM appearing at all major (and some minor) festivities around the Top End. By this time the outside broadcast gazebos were starting to look a little weather worn and dusty. Brand new gazebos and equipment were ordered.

Once again, budgets were in place for the following year by mid-September and approved by CDU. In November 2015 Jih Seymour announced that after 28 years at the station, he would semi retire at the end of the year. He would take long service leave and return in a part-time broadcasting role in August 2016. Matt Bern would become Acting Station Manager in January 2016.

Again, 2015 ended with the annual 12 days of Christmas, the final CAB meeting of the year and another volunteer/staff function at sunset overlooking Darwin Harbour where Jih Seymour was presented with a large print of his favourite Paul Arnold photograph 'Rapid Creek'. Finances remained in order.

On June 5 2016 the station celebrates 35 years of community broadcasting in the NT. 1041 Territory FM thanks all who are involved, who have been involved and all who listen! After 35 years, some of which were very rocky, Territory FM is now on a firm financial footing and is looking good for the next 35 years.

APPENDIX

Staff at the station as of May 2016

Matt Bern – Acting Station Manager/Content Manager
Kristy Collis – Sales Manager
Kathie Snowball – Finance and Administration
Daryl Manzie – Talk host
Peter Butler – Talks Producer/Presenter
Mel Little – Breakfast host/Producer
Daneile Davis – Sales Representative
Steve Hooper – Classic Café host
Lucy Periton – Promotions

Contractors

Graham Edwards – Technician David White – Sport Kevin Jacobsen – Panel Op

Volunteers as of May 2016

Amy Hetherington	Ryan Reid	Claire Tsai
Dan Davies	Daryl Manzie	Dudley Lowe
Emma Sullivan	Imogen Taylor	Kevin Jacobsson
Lisa Sennett	Luke O'Neill	Michelle Snowball
Nic Danks	Peter Ekenberg	Peter Moxham
Ram Kumar	Ribs Mick	Seranna Shutt
Jillaine Jones	Roxy Woolley	Julia Taylor
Andrew King	Yolanda Bacay	Zev Rogers

Community Advisory Board members

George Roussos (Chair)	Emma Sullivan	Linda Fazldeen
Colin Chilcott	Greg Bicknell	Robyn McDougall (ex officio)
Daryl Manzie	Jane Aagaard	Matt Bern (ex officio)

Darwin's greatest hits



TERRITORY FM BREAKFAST WITH MEL LITTLE 6AM-9AM

Our Mel has been talking into a microphone for years, starting in the bingo halls of Tasmania through to radio stations across the country. She is opinionated, full of life and a lover of a fine bottle of bubbly wine or 3.



TERRITORY FM MORNINGS WITH DARYL MANZIE 9AM-11AM

It's 2 hours of everything Darwin with **contributions** from the **news makers** and **community groups** informing you about **events** and **current issues**. Daryl has the most loyal listeners in our city and this year celebrates 15 years on the microphone.



THE CLASSIC CAFE WITH STEVE HOOPER 11AM-3PM

Steve plays the hard to find **rock classics** every hour and more of your **workforce requests**.



DRIVE WITH MATT BERN 3PM-6PM

A real local drive show playing the most music every hour, real-time traffic, interviews and fun. **The Drive show will get you home!**



For more advertising & marketing information please contact:

Kristy Collis | Sales & Marketing Manager

Phone (08) 8946 7573 | Mobile 0419 036 234 | Email kristy@territoryfm.com

Darwin's greatest hits



on the weekends



WEEKEND BREAKFAST

6AM-9AM

Pete Eck has been on air with Territory FM since the TOP FM days. Pete will get you right for the weekend with maximum music, community events & the latest news.



SATURDAY SPORTS SATURDAY 9AM-12PM

David White is Darwin's go to guy for all local & national sport. You can read David's reports in the NT NEWS & hear them on Territory FM. His connection to all things local sport is brought to life every Saturday...

ACOUSTIC STORM SUNDAY 9AM-12PM

Get into your Sunday morning with a fantastic blend of acoustic rock hosted by USA DJ, Jeff Parets.



MAXIMUM MUSIC WEEKENDS

12PM-6PM

Darwin's weekends are built on maximum music. We play the most music every hour, continuous greatest hits, the best fresh music and those iconic songs Darwin just loves. We are the most listened to FM station across the weekends. Join Matt Bern, Steve Hooper, Nic Danks and Seranna Shut for the almighty maximum music weekends.



BEST OF ALICE COOPER SATURDAY 6PM-9PM

Rock star with legend status has been on Territory FM for 10 years now & Alice Cooper continues to rock the weekdays & Saturday nights on 104.1. Nobody plays the rock music Alice plays & these shows have become some of our most popular programs on our dial. Darwin loves Alice Cooper.



CULTURAL VILLAGE SUNDAY 6PM-9PM

Our radio station has a long heritage in multicultural world music. Cultural Village has been on air here for over 10 years. We focus on world music from Samoa, PNG, India and China. These are beautiful radio programs run by our team of dedicated volunteers.



For more advertising & marketing information please contact:

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fm

**CHARLES
DARWIN
UNIVERSITY**

104.1

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**your local
station for
Darwin's
greatest hits**